

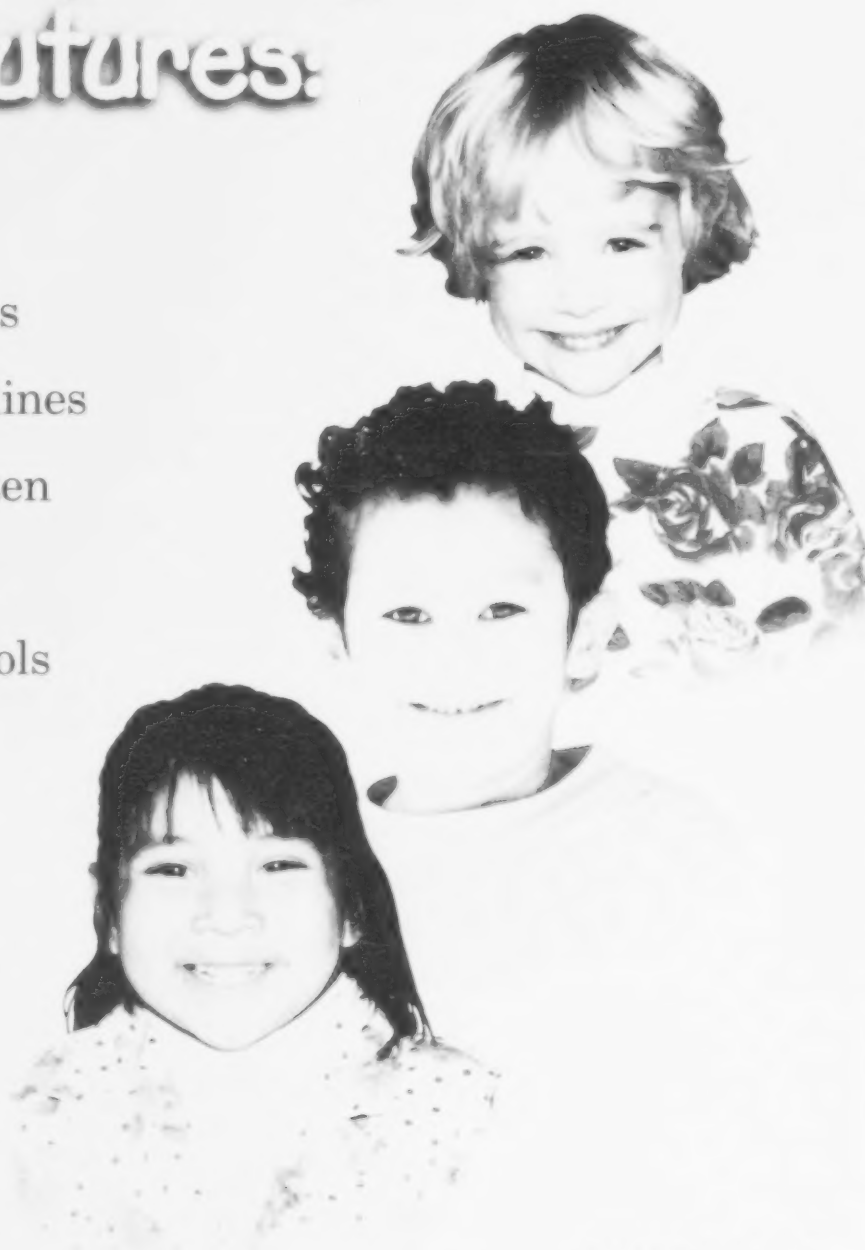


Saskatchewan  
Learning

*Saskatchewan*  
Our Future is Wide Open™

# Better Beginnings. Better Futures.

Effective Practices  
Policy and Guidelines  
for Prekindergarten  
in Saskatchewan  
Community Schools



2004 EDITION

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Saskatchewan Learning  
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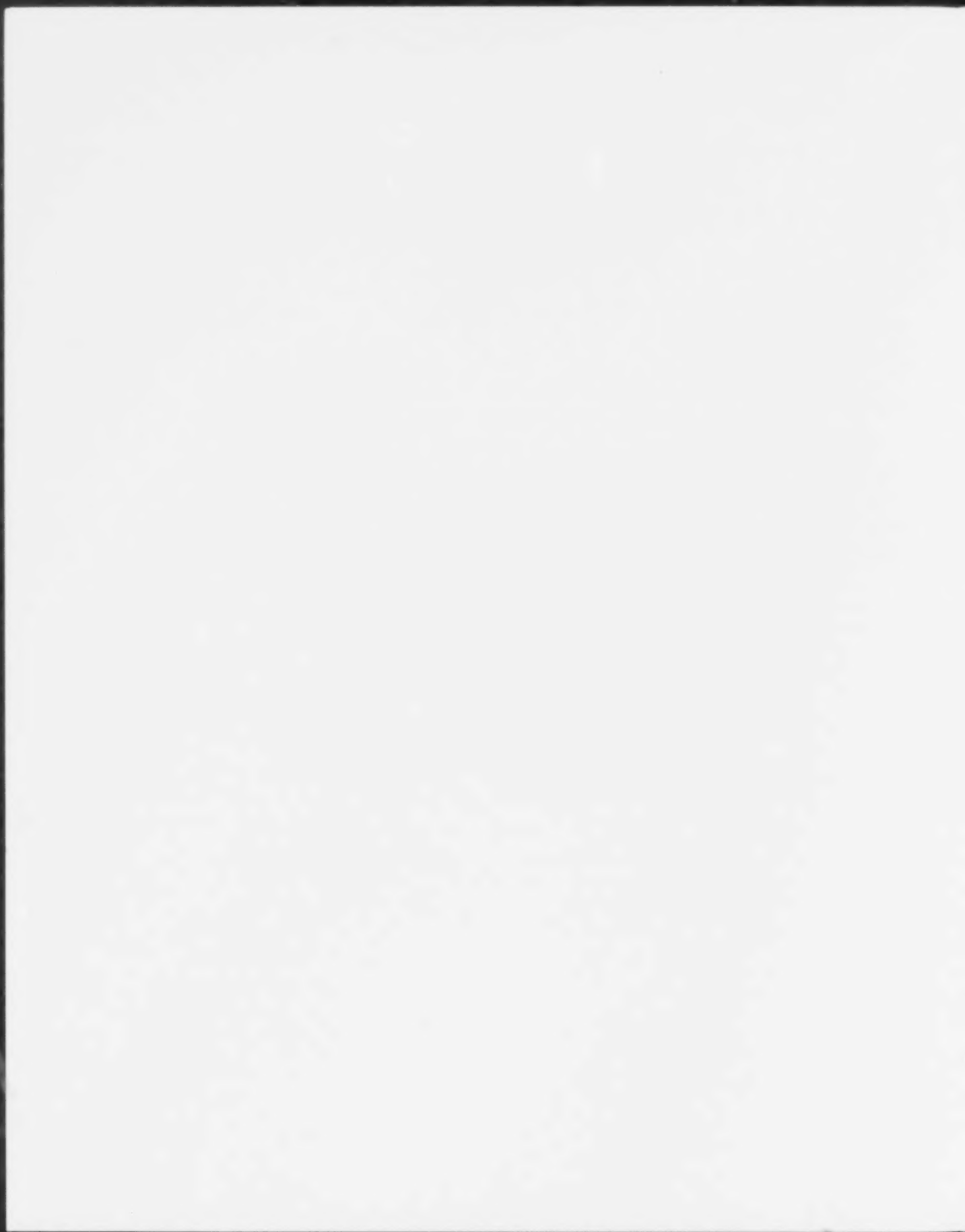
In addition, this handbook draws extensively on the literature of early childhood development and education. A full list of references is included in the appendices.

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### Note:

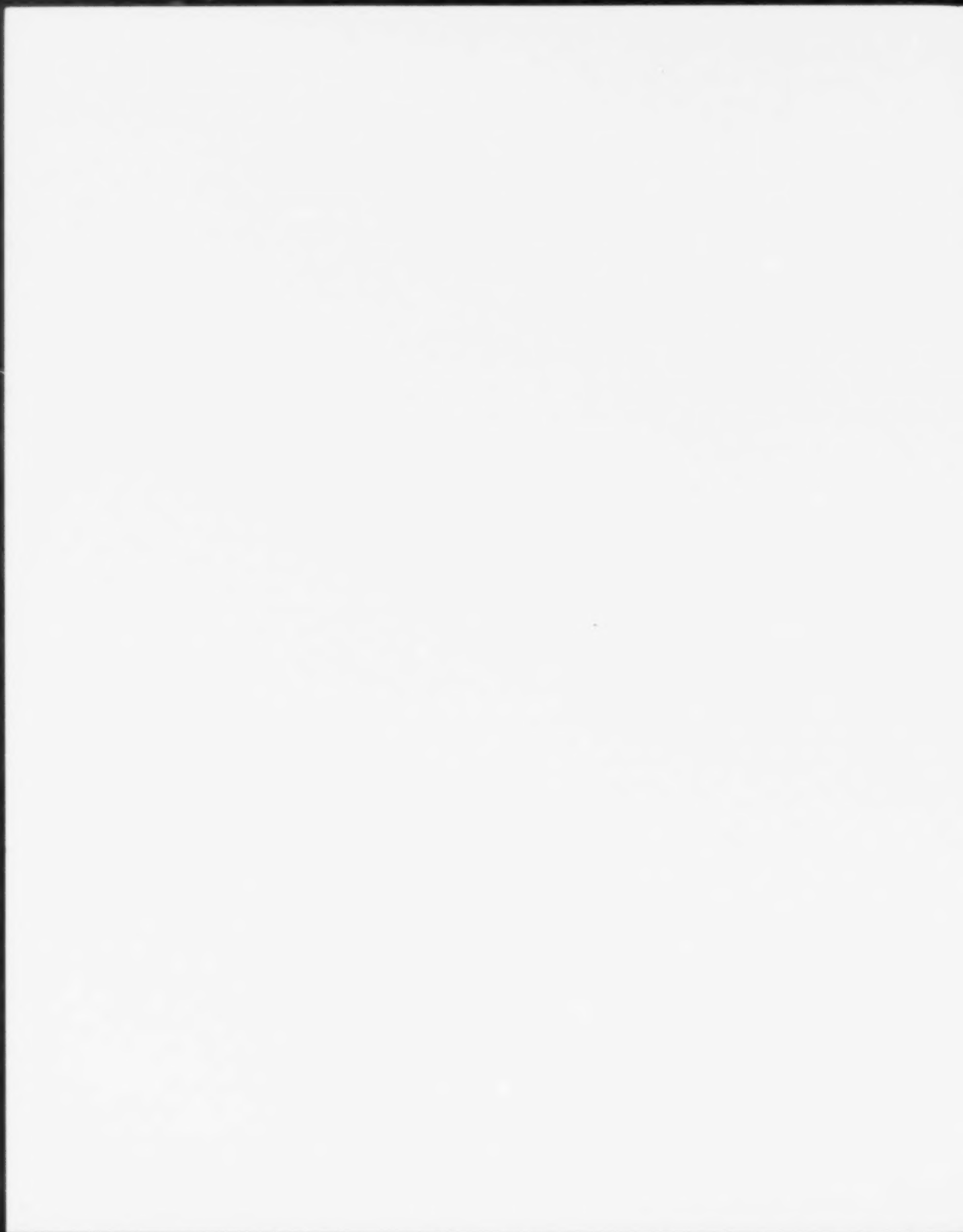
In this policy framework and guide, the term "parent" is used to refer to a child's significant care-giver. This may include a child's mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, foster parent or other guardian.

The policy and guidelines outlined in this document complement the philosophy and conceptual framework in *Building Communities of Hope: Effective Practices for Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs of Children and Youth: 2004*, the policy of the Community Schools Program.



# Contents

|                                                                                 |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>I. Prekindergarten: Prevention and Early Intervention for Young Children</b> |    |
| Introduction.....                                                               | 1  |
| Challenges and Opportunities .....                                              | 2  |
| Prekindergarten at a Glance.....                                                | 3  |
| <b>II. Prekindergarten Conceptual Framework</b>                                 |    |
| Vision .....                                                                    | 4  |
| Goals .....                                                                     | 4  |
| Principles and Strategies .....                                                 | 5  |
| <b>III. Prekindergarten Program Components</b>                                  |    |
| Program Components Illustration.....                                            | 7  |
| Responsive Learning Program and Caring Environment .....                        | 8  |
| Parent and Family Involvement.....                                              | 12 |
| Community Partnerships and Integrated Services.....                             | 15 |
| Continuous Assessment and Improvement.....                                      | 17 |
| <b>IV. Practical Guidelines for Developing a Prekindergarten</b>                |    |
| Responsive Learning Program and Caring Environment                              |    |
| 1. Creating a Caring, Safe and Culturally Affirming Environment .....           | 20 |
| 2. Creating Learning Centres .....                                              | 23 |
| 3. Organizing the Learning Experience: Facilitating Learning Through Play ..... | 28 |
| 4. Selecting the Best Materials.....                                            | 37 |
| 5. Ensuring Effective Openers .....                                             | 38 |
| Parent and Community Involvement.....                                           | 42 |
| Community Partnerships and Integrated Services.....                             | 45 |
| Continuous Assessment and Improvement.....                                      | 46 |
| <b>V. Roles and Responsibilities</b>                                            |    |
| Teacher.....                                                                    | 48 |
| Educational Assistant .....                                                     | 49 |
| Parents .....                                                                   | 49 |
| Community Members and Agencies .....                                            | 50 |
| Boards of Education.....                                                        | 50 |
| Saskatchewan Learning.....                                                      | 50 |
| <b>APPENDICES</b>                                                               |    |
| A. Developmental Benchmarks .....                                               | 52 |
| B. Excerpts from the Provincial Child Abuse Protocol .....                      | 54 |
| C. Prekindergarten Basic Furniture and Materials Inventory .....                | 58 |
| D. References .....                                                             | 60 |



# **I. Prekindergarten: Prevention and Early Intervention for Young Children**

## **Introduction**

Research and experience demonstrate that prevention and early intervention in the first years of life represent a solid investment in a child's development. The benefits range from increased school success and improved cognitive functioning to fewer failed grades and lower rates of juvenile crime.

In 1996, Saskatchewan Learning (then Saskatchewan Education), in collaboration with school divisions, implemented the Prekindergarten Program for Community Schools. The Prekindergarten Program enhances the capacity of communities and school divisions to provide the early intervention supports needed by vulnerable children.

This handbook, *Better Beginnings, Better Futures: Effective Practices Policy and Guidelines for Prekindergarten in Community Schools*, provides the conceptual framework for a high quality, holistic early childhood educational program. Based on the provincial Kindergarten curriculum, it incorporates additional approaches and supports that have proven effective in nurturing success in school for three- and four-year-old children. The handbook provides the vision, principles, and key elements of a preventive, early intervention program that emphasizes developmentally appropriate practice and a child-centred approach to the physical, social-emotional, spiritual and intellectual development of vulnerable children.

The Prekindergarten Program described in this handbook will help give children the opportunity to start Kindergarten with the social, emotional and cognitive skills necessary to succeed. Efforts spent on enabling better beginnings will ensure better futures.

*Ideally, the life of a child is full of wonder, excitement and exploration. It can be beyond the means and ability of some families to provide a stimulating environment and appropriate supports during the critical stage of early childhood. The school can play an important role in providing supports to children and their families.*

## **Challenges and Opportunities: Why Prekindergarten?**

There are a number of compelling reasons for high quality, early intervention Prekindergarten programming for vulnerable children in Saskatchewan schools. These include:

### **Significant Numbers of Vulnerable Children**

Children who display cognitive and behaviour challenges during their early years are vulnerable to poor social, economic and health outcomes as young adults. Analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth found that approximately 30% of Canadian toddlers and preschool-aged children are vulnerable (Willms, 2002).

### **Prevention and Early Intervention Programs Make a Difference in the Lives and Futures of Vulnerable Children**

Research has demonstrated that prevention and early intervention programs, such as Prekindergarten, have both short and long-term benefits in the lives of vulnerable children. The short-term benefits include improved cognitive functioning, increased social skills, improved health and higher self-esteem, all contributing to greater success in school. The long-term benefits include lower rates of juvenile crime, fewer teen pregnancies, fewer failed grades and school drop-outs, and fewer referrals to special education services (Elkind, 1987; Canadian Public Health Association, 1997; Garbarino, 1990; National Crime Prevention Council of Canada, 1996; Schorr & Schorr, 1989).

### **Prevention and Early Intervention Programs are Cost Effective**

Prevention and early intervention in the first years of life represent a solid investment in a child's development and avoid the need for costly interventions later in life (Schweinhart, Barnes, Weikart, 1993).

### **Ensuring a High Quality of Life for All Saskatchewan People**

The principle of equity is fundamental to Saskatchewan people and a foundation of our education system. Providing all students with equitable opportunities and benefits means that some students require additional supports in order to participate and achieve in school. Prevention and early intervention supports afford the necessary opportunity for vulnerable children to succeed in school and to develop into caring, competent and contributing citizens (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996; Madden, et al., 1991; Pollard, 1990).

## Prekindergarten at a Glance

The goal of the Prekindergarten Program is to create an ideal learning environment. Prekindergarten programming incorporates what is known from the literature and practice about the early childhood education, and the needs of vulnerable children, with the strength of the Saskatchewan Kindergarten curriculum. The chart below provides a brief description of Saskatchewan Learning's Prekindergarten Program.

### Prekindergarten is:

- developmentally appropriate educational program, founded on Saskatchewan's Kindergarten curriculum:
  - active, experiential learning through play
  - comprehensive, integrated program within a prepared environment
  - child-centred, self-directed, choice
  - focused on development of whole child – physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual
- meaningful family involvement
- active parent/community council, community partnerships and shared ownership
- integrated health, social services and educational supports
- culturally affirming for all
- mixed age groupings
- intensive exposure — minimum 12 hours per week
- professional teaching staff with a focus in early childhood education

*Prekindergarten programs stress the uniqueness of each individual child's trajectory of development and the importance of self-selected, experimental activities.*

(Molnar, 1991)

## **II. Prekindergarten Conceptual Framework**

### **Vision**

*Prekindergarten in Saskatchewan incorporates a comprehensive range of effective educational practices to support young children's total development and to lay the foundation for school success and life-long learning. It provides a holistic, responsive, developmentally appropriate and caring learning program. The focus is on the healthy development of the whole child — physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual. Family members and care givers are active participants in the children's development and are provided with parenting skill development opportunities and social and health supports. Development and support for Prekindergarten is the shared responsibility of school divisions, community agencies, family members and the province.*

### **Goals**

The goals of the Prekindergarten Program are:

#### **Holistic**

A holistic approach is foundational to the Prekindergarten program. This means that all aspects of a child's life are considered within the program – the family, the community and his or her physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development.

#### **1. School and Life Success for Children**

Children are able to achieve their full potential and to succeed in school and in life due to appropriate developmental opportunities and supports provided for them at an early age.

#### **2. High Quality Prekindergarten Programming**

Prekindergarten early childhood programming is of the highest quality – holistic, responsive, developmentally appropriate and culturally affirming. It is delivered in a safe and caring environment and provides young children with the physical, social, emotional and intellectual supports they require.

#### **3. Increased Parenting Effectiveness and Shared Responsibility**

Through their active involvement in the Prekindergarten program, parents enhance their parenting skills and share responsibility for the well-being and education of their children.

# Principles and Strategies

## **1. Child-Centred / Family Focus**

Children ages three and four are the heart of Prekindergarten. Their positive development is the focus of all programs and services. Emphasis is on the development of the whole child, providing balanced opportunities for children to develop socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually. Prekindergarten affirms that children are usually best served in the context of their families.

## **2. Cooperation and Shared Responsibility**

Teachers work in partnership with family members, the parent groups and community agencies to strengthen the learning program and to provide the range of supports students need. Teachers recognize the central responsibility of parents for the development and well-being of their children and encourage the active involvement of family members in the classroom.

Through shared funding and support for Prekindergarten programming, school divisions, community organizations and the province demonstrate their shared responsibility for early intervention initiatives.

## **3. Equity and Respect for Diversity**

The unique potential, cultural heritage, gender, life experience and capabilities of each child and adult are respected and reflected in the program and environment. This principle goes beyond equality of opportunity, where everyone is treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where all children can benefit. Foundational to the program and environment of each Prekindergarten is the belief that each individual child is worthy of respect and encouragement.

## **4. Preventive, Responsive and Holistic Approaches**

Programs and services are designed to anticipate and offer supports to young children before significant problems develop that require major intervention. They are also responsive to the unique and varied needs of each child. As well, a comprehensive range of supports and services is provided in a coordinated and integrated manner to holistically meet the needs of children and their families.

## **5. Continuous Learning**

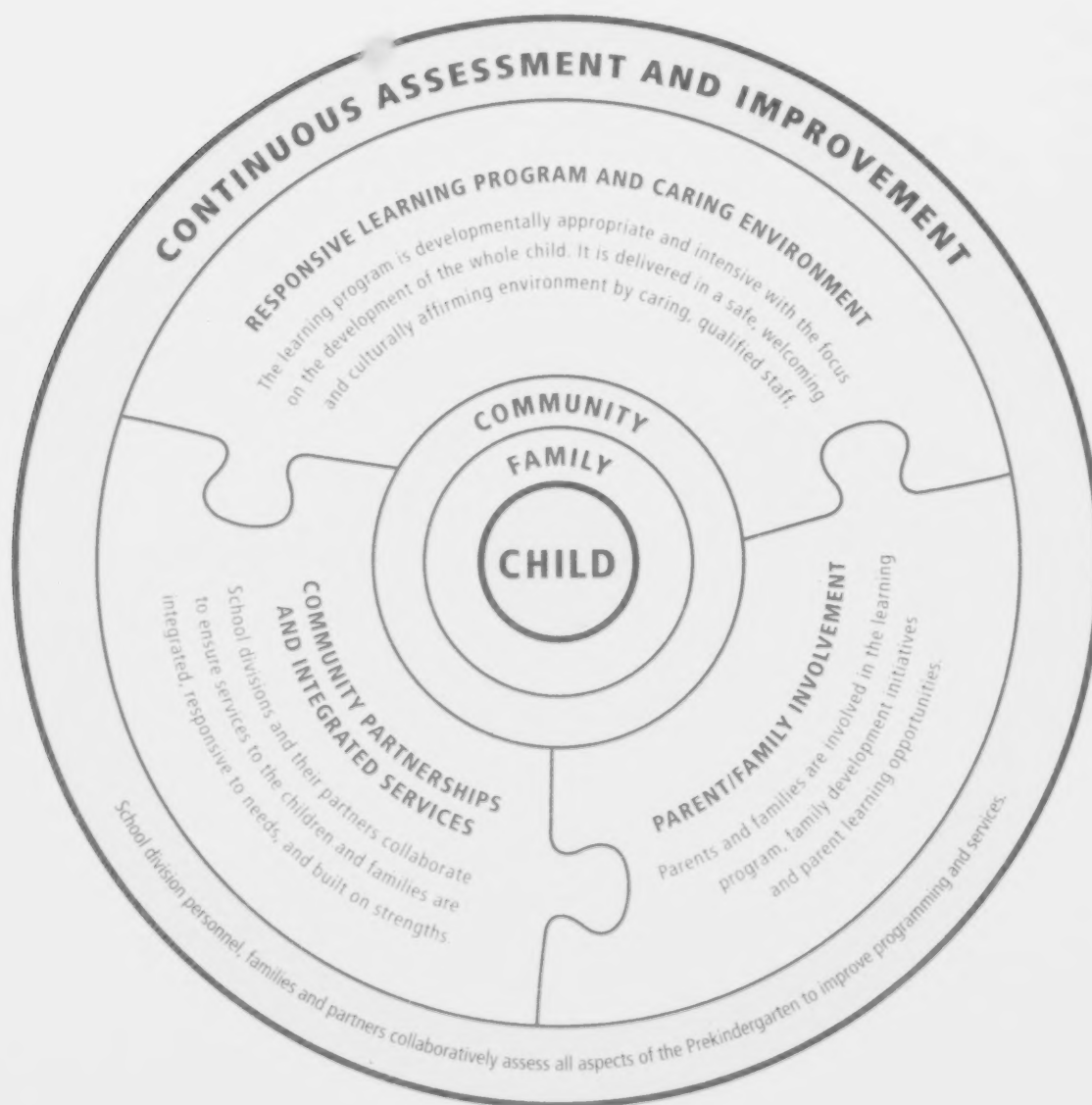
Children's growth and learning are continuous processes. Learning begins at birth and continues through life. It is enhanced by a strong foundation established early in life.

#### **6. Accountability: Continuous Assessment and Renewal**

Educators, school councils, parents, boards of education and community members each have a role in ensuring that the Prekindergarten program meets the needs of children in preparing them to succeed in school. There is continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the program in meeting its objectives and improvements are made to ensure the very best educational practices for vulnerable children.

### III. *Prekindergarten Program Components*

The key components and characteristics of a quality Prekindergarten program are based on the Saskatchewan Kindergarten curriculum with additional elements incorporated that have proven to be effective in meeting the needs of young children. The illustration below depicts these components.





## Responsive Learning Program and Caring Environment

Prekindergarten is a developmentally appropriate early childhood education program. Drawing on Saskatchewan's Kindergarten curriculum as its foundation, the program incorporates additional elements and adapts others to meet the needs of very young, vulnerable children. Specifically, early intervention Prekindergarten focuses on:

- fostering social development and self-esteem;
- nurturing educational growth and school success; and,
- promoting language development.

### Characteristics of the Learning Program

The "effective practices" incorporated into the learning program include:

1. developmentally appropriate programming;
2. prepared environment;
3. development of the whole child: an integrated, balanced focus on physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development;
4. active, experiential focus to learning: an environment that promotes play;
5. child-centred; and,
6. specialized education supports.

#### 1. Developmentally Appropriate Programming

Children go through stages of development as they come to understand and to know themselves and the world around them. (See Appendix A for Developmental Benchmarks.) These stages serve as general guidelines and not as fixed boundaries for instruction.

All young children learn best through active exploration; thus, play is a key component of a developmentally appropriate program.

In creating learning experiences for very young children, it is important to focus on their interests, experiences and background knowledge, as well as on their abilities. The learning program must be flexible and responsive to the varying and unique needs of each child.

Developmentally appropriate programming takes into account those aspects of teaching and learning that change with the age and experience of the learner (Katz in Willis, 1993). The developmental levels of the children within the Prekindergarten may range from 18 months to seven years in some areas, requiring a broad range of appropriate materials and approaches.

*Quality, developmentally appropriate Prekindergarten is intellectually rigorous. This means it focuses on supporting the development of insight, understanding, knowledge, truth and solving intellectual puzzles. (Katz, Rath & Torres., 1987)*

## 2. Prepared Environment

A prepared learning environment, established and maintained by the Prekindergarten teacher, is central to guiding and facilitating children's learning. In the prepared environment, there is purpose behind every toy, manipulative, activity and learning centre. Children are given many choices, but the teacher has carefully considered and planned the array of options for children. Children's varied developmental levels, abilities, interests and needs are part of the planning process. The focus is on providing opportunities for play and activity that facilitate learning.

The preparation of the learning program is based on the establishment of a wide range of learning centres. Establishment of a full range of learning centres is particularly critical for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

## 3. Development of the Whole Child: An Integrated, Balanced Focus on Physical, Social, Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual Development

The learning program emphasizes meeting the developmental needs of the whole child. It strives for a balanced and integrated focus, providing opportunities and supports for children to develop in each of the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains. Thus, it is comprised of a broad range of program focuses and supports, including such things as:

- language and speech interventions;
- fine and gross motor skill development supports;
- social and coping skills development;
- development of cognitive capacities;
- immunization and nutrition programming;
- involvement of Elders and other cultural representatives;
- early childhood psychology and mental health services; and,
- continual attention to nurturing self-esteem and responsibility.

Neglect in one area jeopardizes achievement in the others. Family and community involvement is encouraged to provide the broad range of supports needed.

## 4. Active/Experiential Focus to Learning: An Environment that Promotes Play

Children learn by actively interacting with their environment – the teacher, other children and people in the classroom, as well as with the materials and activities provided. A rich, supportive environment provides many opportunities for learning. (See Section IV for details on creating a stimulating learning environment.) Young children learn best through direct, concrete experience of the world, rather than through the symbolic manipulations more often

*The emphasis is on creating an environment where children are actively involved in learning through play. This reflects the understanding that the more direct involvement young children have with their learning activities, the more effectively they learn.*  
(Beatty, 1992)

associated with formal instruction (particularly reading instruction) (Molnar, 1991).

Quality Prekindergarten programs intellectually challenge young children while they play. The Prekindergarten Program blends an academic focus with play-based learning to provide an effective approach to meeting children's needs. While children choose where they play within the learning centres of the classroom, the teacher has given thoughtful attention to selecting developmentally appropriate materials for each centre. While the children are playing, the teacher moves around to both small groups and individual children to teach. This includes explaining, modelling language and behaviour, encouraging, extending play and creating learning situations.

*The Canadian Association for Young Children believes that:*

- play is natural;
- play is essential for children;
- play is fun, adventurous, open-ended;
- play is creative and spontaneous;
- play is magical and complex;
- play is rewarding and stimulating;
- play is non-threatening;
- play is non-judgemental;
- play is directed by the children;
- play is full of choices and decision making opportunities;
- play is posing questions and hypothesizing; and,
- play is focussed on the process and the product.

(1996)

## 5. Child-Centred

Children are the heart of the Prekindergarten program. In developing learning opportunities and activities for them, teachers build on children's experiences, interests, needs, ideas and developmental levels rather than relying on ready-made, paper-and-pencil activities.

Student choice is key in a child-centred environment. Trusting children to choose where they will play facilitates child-initiated learning. This choice is not haphazard given the prepared and carefully developed nature of the learning centres and the environment. Allowing children choice validates and strengthens their capacities as:

- observers (looking at a variety of centres within the classroom);
- thinkers (determining options within each centre); and,
- decision makers (selecting and focusing on a learning centre).

The teacher participates as an observer, guide and supporter for the children as they make decisions about learning and interacting in the classroom.

## 6. Specialized Educational Supports

The learning program is supplemented by an array of specialized educational supports and services to meet the complex and diverse needs of the children. Some supports and services include:

- language and speech assessment;
- developmental assessment; and,
- psychological assessment.

The section on Community Partnerships and Integrated Services on page 15 provides information on additional supports to the Prekindergarten, such as social workers, family case workers, nutrition program, and cultural programs.

## Characteristics of the Caring Learning Environment

The "effective practices" incorporated into the caring learning environment include ensuring that it is:

1. caring, nurturing and safe – focus on the development of a positive self-concept within each child;
2. culturally affirming; and,
3. open and welcoming.

### **1. Caring, Nurturing and Safe – Focus on the Development of a Positive Self-Concept within Each Child**

Children develop and learn most effectively in an environment that is caring, where they feel respected, cared for and safe to explore and take risks. Prekindergarten teachers create an environment that is nurturing and respectful and develop trusting relationships with the children and their families.

A key focus is the development of a positive self-concept within each child as the foundation for his or her overall well-being. The development of positive self-concept requires an environment that provides for personal acceptance and achievement. Such an environment enables children to be actively involved in learning and to expand the boundaries of their private worlds (Saskatchewan Education 1994).

Safety is a key consideration in creating an effective learning environment for vulnerable children. It encompasses both physical and emotional safety. Children must be safe from physical harm and emotional threats. Just as the physical setting is carefully planned and maintained to ensure the absence of any physical dangers, the interactions between adults and children and among the children are guided by principles of respect, consideration and non-violence. The teacher has the responsibility to ensure that all of the children are safe.

All staff interacting with the children adhere to the guidelines of the *Provincial Child Abuse Protocol* (see Appendix B) that requires school personnel to report concerns or suspicions about the well-being or treatment of a child to a child protection worker (Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment) or police officer.

Other safety considerations include procedures regarding the handling of food, distribution of medications, significant allergies and the transportation of children. In addition, careful attention is paid to ensuring that children are picked up by, or dropped off with their designated care giver.

*Children learn through play. Through their play, children develop sensory motor control, eye-hand coordination and problem solving skills. Physical, social, intellectual and emotional development are all enhanced through play.*

(Canadian Association for Young Children, 1996)

## **2. Culturally Affirming**

Children's diverse ethnic backgrounds and ways of knowing are mirrored and affirmed throughout the classroom and learning program. Care is given to ensure that pictures in books, displays and learning centres, as well as dolls and other toys and materials reflect the diverse background of the students and the community.

Respect for the diversity of the children is a foundational principle in the Prekindergarten and is reflected in all of the activities of the program. The cultures, experiences and values of the students' families are affirmed and celebrated through story telling, music, dance, sharing food and involving family members in the program to share information about their culture or experiences. In addition, visitors to the classroom such as Elders, storytellers, language instructors and community members affirm the children's varied backgrounds.

## **3. Open and Welcoming**

Families are welcome and encouraged to visit the classroom whenever they can, both as observers and active participants. An open door policy and a welcoming atmosphere promote the active involvement of families, encourage communication between family members and Prekindergarten staff, and create an opportunity for young children to experience learning from their parents as well as from the teachers. More information on parent and family involvement is provided in the following section and on page 42.

The environment is also welcoming to the children. Teachers greet the children warmly and are accepting of whatever concerns or issues the children bring to the Prekindergarten at any time, such as their physical hygiene, dress, time of arrival or emotional state. They work with parents in resolving concerns.



## **Parent and Family Involvement**

Parent and family involvement are central to the operation of an effective Prekindergarten and to the children's learning. Prekindergarten staff actively encourage the involvement of parent and family members in the education and development of their children. The objectives are to:

- foster shared responsibility for the development and well-being of the children;
- provide opportunities for parents to participate directly in their children's learning and to be perceived by their children as role models and "teachers" and as key people in the learning program;
- provide learning opportunities for parents to develop and enhance parenting and other life skills; and.

- encourage shared ownership for the Prekindergarten among families.

This focus on family and parent involvement reflects the importance of the family in the development of children. Researchers have demonstrated the significant benefits of parent involvement in children's learning, ranging from improved cognitive functioning to greater school success. Teachers also benefit from direct contact with families, gaining greater knowledge and understanding of the children, their families and the communities in which they teach. For many vulnerable children, parent involvement is the single most important factor in their school success.

## Characteristics of Effective Parent and Family Involvement

The "effective practices" for successful parent involvement include:

1. parents in the classroom;
2. home visiting/liaison;
3. parent/school advisory council/committee; and,
4. family education programs.

### 1. Parents in the Classroom

The direct involvement of parents in classroom activities provides benefits for both the children and the parents. When parents are interested and involved in their children's education, the parents' self-esteem is enhanced as is their interest and willingness to participate in Prekindergarten activities.

Parents have the opportunity to learn about the program, become comfortable in the school atmosphere and to observe their children's socialization and participation. The children are able to see their parents as active participants and role models in their education. As well, when parents have a clear understanding of what takes place in the Prekindergarten, they are better equipped to discuss the program with others and to talk to their children about the learning experience.

Parents can play a variety of roles in the program, including organizing or assisting with outings, assisting with food preparation, reading stories, helping with classroom activities, playing games, preparing educational materials and talking with or listening to the children.

Parents' experience of direct participation in the Prekindergarten program contributes to strengthening their self-confidence and skills as parents and establishes a solid foundation for parental involvement as the children continue their education.

## Benefits when Families Become Involved

### Child Benefits

- Improved academic achievement (Homer, 1984; Epstein, 1988; Kagan, 1984; Snodgrass, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1989)
- Higher graduation rates (Henderson & Berla, 1994)
- Improved attitudes and behaviours, and increased involvement in classroom learning activities (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Henderson & Berla, 1994)

### Parent Benefits

- Greater enrolment in post-secondary education (Henderson & Berla, 1994)
- Increased understanding of the role of schools (Christenson & Cleary, 1990)
- Improved communication between parents and their children and parents and teachers (Christenson & Cleary, 1990)
- Encouragement for some parents to return to school to finish their own education (Johnson, 1991)

### Teacher and School Benefits

- Increased parental satisfaction with teachers' skill and support for the school (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Wilson & Rossman, 1986)
- Greater job satisfaction and fewer requests for transfers (Christenson & Cleary, 1990)
- Increased understanding of the culture of the school and the community (Johnson, 1991)

Some families may find it difficult to become involved in the Prekindergarten. Factors which contribute to this difficulty include shift work and other work responsibilities, enrolment in an educational program, family responsibilities, transportation difficulties, health problems and social, cultural, language or economic differences.

## **2. Home Visiting/Liaison**

Home visits are an important element of the Prekindergarten program. Visiting with parents and family members in their homes is a highly effective way to establish and maintain communication and to foster trust between home and school. The more relaxed atmosphere of their home might be more conducive to conversation and trust. Often parents will share personal information about both the child and the family that they would not necessarily share in the formal school environment. This information can aid the teacher in providing the most effective learning opportunities and supports. For those parents who may have unpleasant memories of their own school experience, meeting in their home may be a positive option.

Sensitivity is needed in approaching parents for a home visit. Some parents may be shy or embarrassed at the prospect of a teacher coming to their home.

## **3. Parent/School Council**

A majority of Prekindergartens are located in Community Schools that have Community School Councils. Parent or school councils provide a formal mechanism for encouraging and facilitating parent involvement in the Prekindergarten and school. The role of the council is to provide advice and support to teachers and students, valuable insight into the needs of the children and information about issues within the community. Specifically, the aim of a council is to:

- foster cooperation and shared responsibility among families, communities and the school for the education and well-being of children;
- strengthen two-way communication, understanding and trust between the Prekindergarten or school and family and community members; and,
- enrich the learning program by contributing to the provision of a comprehensive range of services and supports to meet the diverse needs of the children.

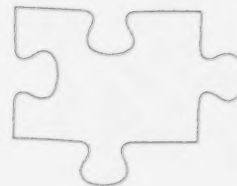
In forming a council the objective is to be as inclusive as possible and to ensure that it represents the social, cultural, economic and gender makeup of the families and community surrounding the school. In addition to parents, school staff and community members are also on the council with the principal playing a key facilitator role.

Where a school council does not exist, the school division and its community partners are encouraged to examine existing structures such as advisory councils or local boards of trustees, or create a new formal structure, to ensure Prekindergarten parents are involved in decision making processes.

#### **4. Family Education Programs**

The family education component of the Prekindergarten program provides learning opportunities for parents and family members. The objective of this component is to strengthen the ability of parents to provide their children with the necessary and appropriate emotional, physical and developmental supports so that their children can grow into healthy and contributing adults. Learning opportunities and support materials requested by families are provided in areas such as family literacy, parenting education, and self-esteem and life-skills development.

## **Community Partnerships and Integrated Services**



Cooperative and collaborative arrangements with community agencies and human service providers extend the capacity of the Prekindergarten to meet the needs of the child in a holistic and coordinated manner. Forming partnerships with local groups such as churches, businesses and community service organizations, as well as collaborative relations with human service agencies such as Community Resources and Employment and the Regional Health Authority are critical to the success of Prekindergarten.

### **Characteristics of Effective Community Partnerships and Service Integration**

The "effective practices" for successful community partnerships and service integration include:

1. coordination and integration of community services and resources;
2. community partnerships; and,
3. effective case management.

#### **1. Coordination and Integration of Community Services and Resources**

Supports to meet many of the needs of Prekindergarten children exist beyond the boundaries of the school in provincial and community human service agencies and organizations. Services from health, mental health, social services, justice and recreation

professionals as well as supports from churches and community service organizations, when integrated into the Prekindergarten program, contribute to meeting the needs of the whole child. In order to provide the full range of diverse supports Prekindergarten children need and to ensure that they are coordinated and appropriate, Prekindergarten staff and school administrators form partnerships and collaborative working relationships with a number of key service providers in their community.

Examples of integrated community services for Prekindergarten children include:

- a food and nutrition program to provide breakfast, lunch and snacks for the children;
- health programs such as immunizations, hearing and vision screening for children and child health education programs for the parents;
- mental health supports for children and families;
- dental hygienist services for dental screening; and,
- social and cultural programs such as an Elders program or involvement with the Open Door Society.

## **2. Community Partnerships**

Community partnerships are collaborative arrangements between Prekindergarten classes or schools and community organizations such as churches, service clubs and businesses for the benefit of the students, the staff and the Prekindergarten program.

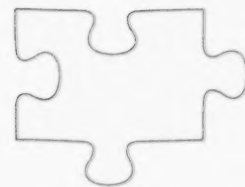
Partnerships with community organizations can provide:

- fund raising and other financial supports to the Prekindergarten;
- volunteers to assist with parenting and adult education programming;
- clothing exchanges and winter clothing provision for children and families;
- additional supports to the food and nutrition program;
- transportation services when necessary; and,
- curriculum enhancements.

## **3. Effective Case Management**

Case management involves creating a team to address the particular needs of the child in a holistic, child-centred manner. This team will involve the family of the child, representatives from all of the service agencies or organizations providing services to the child or family, the teacher and the principal. In Community Schools, this may also include the coordinator.

# Continuous Assessment and Improvement



Assessment provides information about child outcomes, program design, instructional strategies and parent involvement. Through assessment teachers can adapt the environment to promote learning and collaborate with partner agencies to adapt support services.

In the Prekindergarten there are five main areas of focus for assessment:

1. the child;
2. the learning program and the prepared environment;
3. the teacher's practice;
4. support services and community partnerships; and,
5. parent and family participation.

## 1. Assessing Young Children

Assessment refers to the collection of information about student progress. Student assessment plays a critical role in the development and maintenance of the Prekindergarten program. In the context of Prekindergarten, assessment information will contribute to a teacher's understanding of children's interests, abilities and ways of thinking and doing. Teachers can adapt the learning environment and instructional strategies based on this information.

The purpose of assessment is to determine what children do and how they do it, as opposed to how well they do it. It is through observation of children actively engaged in developmentally appropriate activities in learning centres that the teacher collects the assessment information. Specific methods of data collection are discussed in Section IV beginning on page 46.

The widest range of child development in a school program occurs during Prekindergarten. Sometimes changes occur rapidly and may be observable while other times it may seem that development is not occurring. Remembering that children need time to grow and develop provides teachers with the advantage of continuous recording of observation done over a period of months. In doing so, even subtle changes will be noted.

If there are concerns about the development of a specific child, an examination of the physical interaction and learning environments needs to be explored. Awareness of teacher expectations can also yield valuable information. The program should be tailored to meet the needs of the child. If after careful observation questions still remain, a specialist such as a child psychologist may be of assistance in providing information to guide the program development for that child.

*Child assessment is the process of observing, recording, and otherwise documenting work that children do and how they do it, as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 1991 in Jasmine, 1995).*

## **2. Assessing the Learning Program and the Prepared Environment**

There are advantages to looking with a critical but constructive eye at the classroom environment. The prepared environment is essential to a quality program. The Prekindergarten program is structured around the physical arrangement of furniture and organization of learning centres, materials and activities. Children will interact in the learning environment based on choices they make and opportunities the teacher provides. An example of a question a teacher could ask is: "Is there a physical arrangement of furniture and learning centres that facilitates children participating in activities?" The children's response to the prepared learning environment can give the teacher important information about adaptations and/or modifications that are necessary to respond to the ongoing development and ever-changing interests of young children.

The teacher and the students are partners in a learning process that is cyclical. The teacher structures a learning environment to facilitate child development. Through systematic and continuous assessment, the teacher is aware of the needs of the children. The teacher makes adaptations to the learning environment to continue to facilitate child development. Through ongoing and thoughtful assessment and evaluation of the Prekindergarten program, the process of refinement enables there to be congruence between what the children need and what is provided for them.

For more information see *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*, page 166.

## **3. Facilitating Teacher Self-Reflection**

Assessment in Prekindergarten extends beyond the child and includes teacher self evaluation. The purpose of teacher self assessment is to determine personal strengths and areas for professional development. It provides an opportunity to refine instructional strategies and materials selected for child engagement.

For more information see *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*, page 165.

## **4. Assessing Support Services and Community Partnerships**

Prekindergarten children and their families benefit from a range of services and supports, often provided by community agencies and organizations. School divisions are encouraged to engage in formal and informal assessment and planning practices with community partners to evaluate the support services provided to Prekindergarten children and their families. It will be important to include the parents, Prekindergarten teacher, educational assistants, school principal, speech language pathologists, social workers, parent educators, public

health nurses, nutritionists, dental health nurses and other essential partners in the discussions.

Assessment considerations include:

- needs of children and families;
- desired outcomes for children and families;
- existing skills, services and resources; and,
- ability of partners to enhance existing services or establish new initiatives.

Detailed information is available in *Interagency Projects: An Evaluation Guide (March 1997)*.

As School<sup>PLUS</sup> is fully implemented, schools will be working together with community organizations and agencies to evaluate, plan and implement a comprehensive range of supports and services for children and their families. Prekindergarten personnel are encouraged to become involved in bringing together local early childhood organizations to assess and coordinate initiatives. Organizations may include child-care centres, preschools, Early Childhood Intervention Programs (ECIPs), Aboriginal Head Start Programs, First Nations and Tribal Councils.

## **5. Assessing Parent and Family Participation**

A key component of the Prekindergarten is parent/family participation. The purpose of the assessment is to determine which parent/family participation practices are working well, which need improvement and what new practices and initiatives are needed.

The first source of information will be the parents themselves. Information can be gathered through a combination of informal (conversations, observation) and formal (interviews, focus groups, questionnaires) methods. Questions or discussion topics may include:

- what activities/events the parents found most useful or interesting;
- parents' preferred ways of involvement, times and days;
- suggestions for changes to the family component; and,
- suggestions for future family activities/programs.

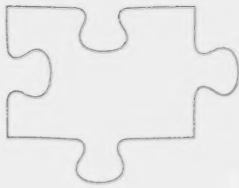
After receiving input from the parents, Prekindergarten personnel may wish to host a gathering to review the input and reflect on the next steps, and/or assemble a team (including parents) to evaluate parent and family involvement objectives and practices, including:

- classroom participation;
- home visits/liaison;
- parent/school committee or council; and,
- parent/family education and support programs.

## ***IV. Practical Guidelines for Developing a Prekindergarten***

This section provides practical "how to" suggestions for creating a Prekindergarten, integrating a full range of effective practices in the following areas:

- Responsive Learning Program and Caring Environment
  1. Creating a Caring, Safe and Culturally Affirming Environment
  2. Creating Learning Centres
  3. Organizing the Learning Experience: Facilitating Learning Through Play
  4. Selecting the Best Materials
  5. Ensuring Effective Operations
- Parent and Community Involvement
- Community Partnerships and Integrated Services
- Continuous Assessment and Improvement



### **Responsive Learning Program and Caring Environment**

#### **1. Creating a Caring, Safe and Culturally Affirming Environment**

The following are suggestions to create a Prekindergarten environment that is warm, caring, safe and culturally affirming:

##### **Warm and Caring: Child Guidance**

In the Prekindergarten, teachers and educational assistants provide guidance and support to each child. They create a warm, caring and respectful environment where students know they are safe from any form of humiliation or hurt and are encouraged to explore, take risks and enjoy learning through play.

##### **Dealing with Negative Behaviour and Discipline:**

Some vulnerable children have a broad repertoire of negative behaviours due to any combination of the following:

- they don't know what positive behaviours are because they have not seen them modelled;
- they know the positive behaviours cognitively, but may have not had the chance to practise them in a safe and accepting environment; and,
- they have emotional responses (such as anger, fear and anxiety) that prevent positive behaviours.

In dealing with negative behaviour, teachers provide guidance, model positive behaviours and reinforce and celebrate the

positive. Most importantly, they provide children with the opportunity to practise replacing negative behaviour with acceptable actions in an environment of acceptance, support and patience.

Children are guided and supported to develop self-management capabilities and an ability to make good decisions by being taught appropriate alternatives to negative behaviours. All of their endeavours are recognized and their efforts are validated. Teachers work to ensure that the children feel good about themselves and that they enjoy school.

#### **A CHILD**

*I am a little child  
I hammer loudly  
I build recklessly  
I read imaginatively  
I work originally  
I sing rapturously  
May no one ever quell  
my creativity  
Just refine it.*

(author unknown)

#### **Appropriate Adults Interactions with Children**

- using a quiet, gentle voice;
- using a respectful tone of voice and caring, attentive facial expressions and body language;
- calling children by their first names
- praising children's endeavours, efforts and successes;
- commenting realistically, but positively about less than successful efforts; and,
- talking patiently and privately (when possible) with a child about inappropriate behaviour.

#### **Creating a Safe and Accessible Learning Program**

School divisions are encouraged to consider the following points to ensure that the Prekindergarten space is safe and accessible.

##### ***Physical Environment***

- ensure that the classroom, hallways, stairs, playgrounds and other areas of the school are safe and accessible for children;
- store fire extinguishers and first aid supplies in an appropriate and convenient location;
- orient children to safety procedures and fire drills;
- ensure that doors are easily opened by small children;
- check equipment frequently for cleanliness and loose parts; and,
- modify washroom facilities and drinking fountains for children's use.

*A safe and stimulating environment in which to play and explore helps young children develop the learning and coping skills they will need as they grow into adulthood.*

(Health Canada, 1997)

### **Personal Safety**

- ensure that all Prekindergarten staff are aware of and adhere to the guidelines of the *Provincial Child Abuse Protocol* (see Appendix B) that requires all school personnel to report concerns about a child to a child protection worker or police officer;
- establish procedures requiring visitors to report to the school office before proceeding to the Prekindergarten classroom;
- ensure that procedures are in place to ensure that children are picked up by designated care givers;
- establish procedures to follow if children are not picked up after school;
- request parents to provide the name of an emergency contact person in the event that the parent cannot be reached;
- ensure that children who are transported by bus or taxi are familiar with the routine;
- include a space on the registration form for parents to list allergies and/or medication. Share this information with other staff and file in the school office. Special certification may be required for children to receive medication at school; and,
- request written permission any time children leave the school grounds for educational tours. Have parent chaperones show proof of a valid driver's licence and valid vehicle registration. The law requires that each child have his or her own seat belt in a car or van.

### **Food Safety**

- follow public health guidelines in the preparation, serving and storage of food.

### **Ensuring a Culturally Affirming and Gender Equitable Learning Program and Environment:**

Throughout the classroom and the program, ensure that the cultures of the students and their community are reflected and that there is attention to gender differences. Consider carefully the activities chosen, classroom displays, bulletin boards and materials within learning centres. Suggestions for promoting multicultural and gender awareness and understanding include:

- choosing appropriate games, stories, legends, poems, finger plays, music, dance, songs and celebrations from a variety of cultures;
- creating bulletin boards that include pictures of the children in the classroom, positive pictures of children and adults from many cultures and of both genders engaged in a variety of activities and objects characteristic of familiar and unfamiliar cultures and customs;

- exhibiting multicultural materials, objects, fabrics, pictures, books, postcards and clothing;
- including in learning centres, materials and activities that promote understanding of diverse cultures (such as bamboo scoops, saris, peacock feathers, cooking utensils, food samples, baskets, puppets, masks and tools) and opportunities for both genders; and,
- asking family members to share cultural information, materials, food, stories and activities with the children in the class.

When selecting materials that are appropriate for the classroom, refer to the guidelines in *Beyond Bias: Informational Guidelines for Reducing Negative Bias in Instructional Materials*, Saskatchewan Education (1984), *Selecting Fair and Equitable Learning Materials*, Saskatchewan Education (1991) and *Diverse Voices: Selecting Equitable Resources for Indian and Métis Education*, Saskatchewan Education (1995). These guidelines will help to assess and evaluate classroom materials and resources. (Refer to page 37 for more information on materials selection.)

*The unique potential, cultural heritage, gender, life experiences and capabilities of each child and adult are respected and reflected in the program and environment. This principle goes beyond equality of opportunity, where everyone is treated the same, to foster a barrier-free environment where all children can benefit. Foundational to the program and environment of each Prekindergarten is the belief that each individual child is worthy of respect and encouragement.*

## 2. Creating Learning Centres

Young children need opportunities to play and experiment with materials and activities. Learning centres provide a way of organizing the Prekindergarten classroom so teachers can promote independent learning and decision making. When children play at learning centres they are exploring, learning and experimenting.

To create the appropriate learning centres, teachers may wish to consider the following suggestions:

- organize the Prekindergarten classroom into as many learning centres as possible to stimulate active learning and allow children to make choices as to where their learning-play will occur;
- establish learning centres (e.g., water table, sand table, paint table and play dough centre) that promote all of the basic skills necessary for reading, writing and socialization;
- ensure that learning centres are child-friendly, providing easy access to all materials and equipment and easy pick-up when a child is finished. Determine the number of children participating at a particular centre by placing an appropriate number of chairs (at the paint table) or shirts (at the water table). Themes and topics of emphasis can be introduced at each learning centre to complement other learning in the classroom through the addition or removal of props and other equipment;

- clearly define each learning centre by the organization of the furniture and materials so that children can distinguish among them. A table and chairs are needed for some learning centres. A round table (for the paint centre) promotes socialization and modelling among children and by adults; and,
- encourage the children to select the learning centre(s) of their choice. Provide daily opportunities for them to participate in play that promotes emerging literacy, mathematics, science, arts education and fine and gross motor development.

For more information about learning centres, see pages 26-45 in *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*.

#### **Learning Centre Suggestions**

**1. Quiet Activities:**

puzzles, books, cassette recorder, theme table, listening discrimination table

**2. Numbers, Science:**

sand (wet and dry), water, science inquiry centre, sensory awareness (touch, taste, smell, sounds)

**3. Creativity:**

collage table, carpentry

**4. Everyday Living:**

role playing, puppets, large blocks

**5. Motor Skills:**

Large equipment, vehicles, props, bean bags

(Nash, 1989)

A quality Prekindergarten will have the following learning centres:

| Learning Centres     | Example of Equipment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Alternative Themes/<br>Enhancements                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Sample Concepts and<br>Objectives                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Water Table       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plastic-lined, solidly constructed table, approximately child's waist height that allows about 35-45 cm. depth of water and has a flat bottom and lid</li> <li>squeezable plastic containers and lids, sieves, funnels, water wheels, clear plastic hoses, sponges</li> <li>corks and other materials that sink and float</li> <li>plastic shirts/aprons (painting shirts can double)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancements: food colouring, anti-bacterial soap, snow, whipped laundry detergent</li> <li>change the water daily</li> <li>keep a short handled mop or rags close by so children can clean own spills</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experiment, compare, demonstrate, predict, plan, interpret, extend, explore, discover, conclude, feel, determine.</li> <li>pre-writing, pre-math</li> </ul>             |
| 2. Sand Table        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plastic-lined, solidly constructed table, approximately child's waist height that allows about 35-45 cm. depth of sand and has a flat bottom and lid</li> <li>sanitized sand is preferred</li> <li>variety of plastic containers and lids, sieves, funnels, sand wheels, plastic hoses, pails, shovels, spoons, various sized cylinders, towels</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancements: grain, water and sand, dirt or aquarium gravel</li> <li>keep short handled broom close by so children can clean own spills</li> </ul>                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>repeat, describe, explain, estimate, predict, measure, assess, judge, fill, organize, resolve, pour, pre-writing, pre-math, fine and gross motor development</li> </ul> |
| 3. Paint Centre      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>round table and chairs and/or easels</li> <li>different colours and forms of paint: powder, premixed, blocks, finger paint</li> <li>variety of brushes</li> <li>paper</li> <li>paint shirts/aprons</li> <li>storage for supplies and shirts (accessible to children)</li> <li>water source</li> </ul>                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancements: soap, glue, sand and sparkles</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>repeat, express, select, recall, imagine, interpret, create, experiment, transfer, produce, plan, design, organize, choose</li> </ul>                                   |
| 4. Play Dough Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>containers for storing play dough</li> <li>flour, salt for making dough</li> <li>variety of cutlery, cookie cutters, rolling pins</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manipulate, demonstrate, select, create, compare, explore, feel, determine</li> </ul>                                                                                   |

| Learning Centres                       | Example of Equipment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Alternative Themes/<br>Enhancements                                                                                                                                                                                              | Sample Concepts and<br>Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5. Dramatic/Dress-Up</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• container for storage of dress-up clothes children can access</li> <li>• plastic hats (easy to keep clean)</li> <li>• mirrors (full-size allows child to view full self)</li> <li>• variety of clothes, hats, purses, scarves, belts, shoes and props</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people in neighbourhood</li> <li>• cultural differences</li> <li>• enhancement: safety – e.g., add fire fighter and police shirts and make badges to complement safety theme</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relate, identify, select, express, present, infer, speculate, imagine, identify, create, consider, plan, respond</li> </ul>                                                                                                               |
| <b>6. Domestic/House Keeping</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• table and chairs</li> <li>• baby beds, cribs, high-chair, stroller</li> <li>• refrigerator, stove, sink, cupboard</li> <li>• dolls</li> <li>• dishes, pots, cutlery</li> <li>• telephone(s)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancement: store – e.g., add plastic fruit, empty cans and boxes, cash register, papers and pencils for lists, bags for groceries, play money</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss, restate, predict, speculate, match, label, speak, listen, estimate, assess, project, imagine, resolve, establish, pursue</li> </ul>                                                                                              |
| <b>7. Library/Private, Quiet Space</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an area of the room away from traffic flow</li> <li>• ever changing selection of children's literature</li> <li>• stuffed animals, pillows, pictures</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancements: upholstered furniture, plants</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• model, listen, speak, predict, repeat, interpret, discover, verify, analyze, count, tell, imagine, infer, explain, read</li> </ul>                                                                                                        |
| <b>8. Listening Centre</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tape recorder and tapes with stories and songs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancements: add a listening post for head phones and multiple copies of story books</li> </ul>                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeat, name, listen, speak, predict, operate, discover, review, read</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>9. Writing/<br/>Creative Centre</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• table and chairs</li> <li>• bins, baskets and containers to store materials</li> <li>• writing and illustrating materials: chalk, markers, crayons, pencils, scissors, glue</li> <li>• paper: lined and unlined, variety of colours, textures and sizes</li> <li>• recycled material: catalogues, magazines, cards, ribbon, foil packing chips, buttons, foam containers, etc.</li> <li>• containers and packaging with print that children can copy</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• record, explain, identify, express, label, create, plan, imagine, measure, solve, experiment, adapt, judge, design, invent, form, integrate, write, respond, compare, read</li> <li>• pre-reading, pre-math, emerging literacy</li> </ul> |

| Learning Centres                | Example of Equipment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Alternative Themes/<br>Enhancements                                                                                                  | Sample Concepts and<br>Objectives                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10. Fine Motor Area             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>storage shelves and bins, table and chairs</li> <li>puzzles of various sizes and themes with different numbers of pieces and materials</li> <li>lace-up cards, different colour and texture</li> <li>stringing beads, string, shoe laces, wool, plastic for lacing</li> <li>zipper, snap and tie materials</li> <li>blocks of varied shapes, sizes and textures (Duplo, Lego)</li> <li>peg boards, pegs, elastics</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancement: add cereal such as Fruit Loops to make edible necklaces and bracelets</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>repeat, locate, select, demonstrate, tinker, manipulate, plan, classify, estimate, measure, experiment, judge, plan, build, consider</li> </ul> |
| 11. Science/<br>Discovery Table | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plants, pets, seeds, rocks, cones, shells, magnifying glass, magnet, batteries, wire, aquarium, terrarium, nests, multi-sensory materials</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancement: materials found by children</li> </ul>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>find, label, select, predict, speculate, estimate, compare, manipulate, experiment, imagine, decide, feel, verify</li> </ul>                    |
| 12. Work Bench                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hammer, nails, boards and scraps of wood, vise, screws, screwdriver(s) and saw</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancement: large tree stump</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>operate, know, demonstrate, measure, experiment, explore, manipulate, create, choose, design</li> </ul>                                         |
| 13. Large Motor Area            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>space for use of riding toys, running, climbing, jumping, tumbling</li> <li>storage and carpet</li> <li>large blocks and interlocking toys of different textures and sizes, interlocking road track</li> <li>games</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancements: props such as toy vehicles, animals and people</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify, select, sequence, plan, compare, operate, decide, invent, build, devise, consider, respond, discover, match</li> </ul>                |
| 14. Computer                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>table, chairs, computer, programs (age appropriate)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancements: joy stick and printer</li> </ul>                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>operate, manipulate, demonstrate, solve, discover, choose, respond</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| 15. Music                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>storage container for a variety of commercially produced and hand made rhythm instruments</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancement: instruments used in different cultures</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify, experiment, create, devise, imagine, manipulate</li> </ul>                                                                            |

*Children have a natural mechanism that enables them to make sense of their world – that mechanism is play. For over 100 years, researchers have studied play and have found that play:*

- *enhances a child's language development;*
- *encourages creativity and problem solving;*
- *provides a context through which the child develops representational thought, an essential foundation for reading, mathematics and science;*
- *develops higher motivation to learn and develops higher self-esteem; and,*
- *is an integral part of a child's being. It is the business of childhood, and it has a unique and vital role in the whole educational process.*

(The Canadian Association for Young Children,

### **3. Organizing the Learning Experience: Facilitating Learning Through Play**

Suggestions for organizing the learning experience are categorized under the following headings:

- Ensuring Developmental Appropriateness
- Assessing a Child's Developmental Level
- Facilitating the Development of the Whole Child
- Encouraging Learning Through Play
- Developing a Child-Centred Learning Program
- Sample Timetable
- Assessing the Learning Program

#### **Ensuring Developmental Appropriateness**

Plan the environment to meet the children's developmental levels, varied interests and diverse needs. To gain an accurate awareness and understanding of the children's needs, teachers and educational assistants can observe, talk with and play with the children. In this way, teachers and educational assistants observe behaviours and pick up on cues and ideas. The information gained can then be used to develop, adapt and extend play situations and to introduce or change themes and learning centre materials. Creativity, close observation and thought are the key tools in tapping into children's interest.

Accommodate the various levels of development of the children by ensuring that each learning centre has a broad range of materials. The developmental range the materials should address is from 18 months to six years or more to ensure appropriateness for all students. (See Appendix A for Developmental Benchmarks.)

Be flexible and ready to make changes. Prekindergarten teachers are challenged to continually adapt the learning program and environment to ensure that the children's exploration of materials, play and learning is challenging and satisfying.

## Child Development and Learning Activities

|                  |                                     |                                                                                         |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Physical</b>  | Gross Motor                         | Large equipment, space                                                                  |
|                  | Fine Motor — hands, feet            | Additional equipment<br>Puzzles<br>Construction and collage work                        |
|                  | — eye-hand<br>co-ordination         | Puzzles or small activities, blocks<br>Art activities                                   |
|                  | — articulation                      | Opportunity for conversation with<br>adults and peers                                   |
|                  | Sensory — body<br>movement<br>sense | Large equipment, space                                                                  |
| <b>Cognitive</b> | Perceptual — visual                 | Puzzles, small games, pre-reading<br>activities, blocks                                 |
|                  | — auditory                          | Cassette tapes, listening activities,<br>records, films, trips                          |
|                  | — other                             | Feelie box, smelly jars, taste table                                                    |
|                  | Conceptual — number                 | Water, dry sand, wet sand, puzzles,<br>art activities, store play                       |
|                  | — science                           | Sensory awareness, plants, animals,<br>science table, cooking                           |
|                  | — everyday<br>living                | Role play (house, store, etc.), puppets,<br>also props for gross motor                  |
|                  | — creativity                        | Paint, collage, wood bevel, playdough,<br>base sculpture                                |
|                  | Language — receptive                | Records, films, cassette tape, teacher                                                  |
|                  | — expressive                        | Role play, receptive teacher, larger<br>blocks, puppets, effigies, theme table          |
|                  | — imaginative                       | Peer conversation, creative activities                                                  |
|                  | — symbolic                          | Picture story writing, books, pre-<br>reading activities                                |
| <b>Affective</b> | Psychological                       | Positive reinforcement, opportunities<br>to achieve, and to become self-<br>disciplined |
|                  | Social-Moral                        | Role play, other classroom interaction                                                  |

Nash, 1989

*Education at this age is not about imparting facts and imposing strict schedules. It's about listening, guiding, helping individual children to make sense of the real world. The curriculum is learning to say goodbye to Mom, forming relationships with others, feeling competent exploring their world.*

(Hancock & Wingert, 1997)

### **Assessing a Child's Developmental Level**

When children first begin to participate in Prekindergarten they need time – a transitional period – to adjust to the new setting, establish relationships with the teacher(s) and develop a level of comfort and trust. Only after this period of time, which will vary among children, will it be effective to assess the child's developmental level.

Assessments can be either formal or informal. Informal screens, based on observation and anecdotal notes recorded over a period of time, can provide valuable information about young children. Not every child requires a formal assessment, but all children will benefit from informal and continual observation of their abilities, interests, needs and transitions. This information allows the teacher to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities.

Formal assessments are needed when the teacher or the parents have concerns about a child's behaviour or developmental abilities. Formal assessment should be administered and interpreted by trained professionals. These professionals will then assist the teacher in providing appropriate supports.

### **Facilitating Development of the Whole Child — Integrated, Holistic Programming:**

The elements of the Prekindergarten program work together in a holistic manner to promote the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development of each child. The chart provided on the following page outlines a number of suggestions to aid in the development of the whole child.

## Facilitating the Development of the Whole Child

| Physical                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Social                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Emotional/Spiritual/Cultural                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Intellectual                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide regular access to the gym or multi-purpose area;</li> <li>plan opportunities for outdoor play;</li> <li>provide daily opportunities to run, jump, climb, swing and participate in other cardiovascular exercise;</li> <li>provide activities that promote flexibility and coordination, such as yoga, dance, and playing with balls, hula hoops and skipping ropes;</li> <li>provide access to tricycles and riding toys;</li> <li>plan neighbourhood walks or hikes; and,</li> <li>participate in swimming lessons.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>help children feel comfortable in the classroom by using facial expressions, tone of voice and body language that show acceptance of each child;</li> <li>play cooperative games such as parachute games that encourage the children to work together;</li> <li>accept children's developmental levels and willingness to participate;</li> <li>plan field trips and outings;</li> <li>visit other classrooms;</li> <li>pair children with older students for "reading buddies" or other activities;</li> <li>hold children's conferences; and,</li> <li>encourage sharing of materials, toys, manipulatives and space among children.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourage children to separate from care givers;</li> <li>give children leadership roles within the classroom, such as teacher's helper;</li> <li>ensure that children have a sense of belonging (e.g., put their name on their locker or coat book, label all of their work);</li> <li>trust children to make choices and suggestions about their own learning by allowing them to select books from the library, move learning materials from one learning centre to another and select which pieces of their work will be displayed;</li> <li>accept children's creative endeavours and do not judge them by adult standards;</li> <li>encourage independence by giving children responsibilities, such as putting away materials in a learning centre, getting their shoes for gym time or delivering a message to the office;</li> <li>use photographs of the children as teaching tools;</li> <li>validate the contributions of the children by engaging them in respectful conversations, acknowledging their ideas and using their suggestions;</li> <li>trust children to make decisions and take risks;</li> <li>develop children's trust in the teacher by being honest and open and making the classroom safe and respectful;</li> <li>provide appropriate consequences for inappropriate behaviour;</li> <li>provide a predictable routine within the program; and,</li> <li>build confidence and self-esteem by offering genuine praise for effort, accepting a wide range of abilities and giving many opportunities for each child to experience success.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide materials, learning centres and activities that are developmentally appropriate;</li> <li>observe the children as they interact and extend their play;</li> <li>pose open-ended questions as the children interact with the environment;</li> <li>challenge the children's thinking by modelling and by asking questions as they play;</li> <li>stimulate their thinking and their play by modifying the environment regularly;</li> <li>extend learning by using a variety of props and encouraging children to use their imaginations;</li> <li>provide opportunities for children to solve problems, improvise, investigate, modify and create; and,</li> <li>encourage decision making by providing opportunities for children to make choices.</li> </ul> |

*Play is a child's work.*  
(Maria Montessori)

### **Encouraging Learning through Play:**

Suggestions to encourage young children to learn through their play include:

- establishing a variety of learning centres to provide a broad range of opportunities to stimulate play;
- selecting a rich and full range of materials and activities for the program and continually assessing and modifying each learning centre to ensure its sustained interest and appropriateness for the children;
- participating as a "master player" who observes, guides and supports the children as they make choices about their learning within the prepared environment in the classroom; and
- encouraging and fostering children's capacity for choice by inviting children to play, modelling the play, and by talking about the possibilities of a play centre.

### **Developing a Child-Centred Learning program:**

The following are suggestions to consider in order to create a learning program that is centred on the child's individual development, interests and preferences.

- Encourage children to provide ideas for themes, activities and the use of materials.
- Be open and willing to accept rejection from the children for adult suggestions of themes or other ideas.
- Play and experiment with materials before introducing them to the classroom to ensure that they are open-ended and appropriate.
- Provide children with many opportunities and encouragement to make their own choices. It may be necessary to demonstrate the play possibilities in a learning centre or to simply observe until they have achieved their own comfort level.
- Acknowledge and celebrate when children have discovered new ways of playing in a centre, a creative or different interpretation or a learning that they can share.

For more information  
about play and learning  
see pages 14 and 15 in  
*Children First: A  
Curriculum Guide for  
Kindergarten.*

### **Sample Timetable**

Develop the timetable for the day to allow significant blocks of time for play. Allotting a minimum of 60 minutes a day for play at learning centre(s) is a good rule of thumb, as this provides children with a large enough block of time to explore a full range of materials and to interact with other students and adults.

This block of learning centre play time gives the teacher opportunity to teach individual children or small groups of children directly, to observe, and to assess and note issues impacting upon the progress of the children.

## A Sample Day: Timetable

|               |              |                                       |
|---------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| 9:00 - 9:30   | 12:45 - 1:15 | <i>Opening Activities/Circle Time</i> |
| 9:30 - 10:45  | 1:15 - 2:30  | <i>Learning Centre Time/Clean-Up</i>  |
| 10:45 - 11:30 | 2:30 - 3:15  | <i>Snack Time/Exercise Time</i>       |
| 11:30 - 11:45 | 3:15 - 3:30  | <i>Home Time</i>                      |

### Opening Activities / Circle Time

During this time, the children take off and hang up their coats and put on their shoes. The educational assistant helps them with their clothing and shoes. As they are finished, they join the teacher at the carpeted area, sitting on the floor in a circle for circle time. The teacher reads stories or visits informally with the children until every one is settled in the circle.

#### *Stories*

- Select stories for use at circle time that complement a theme or specific concept being developed. For example, a theme might be dinosaurs and a concept could be sharing or personal safety. Additional stories can be chosen by one of the children.
- Choose a different child each day to be the teacher's helper for the day. Perhaps call the child the helping hand and give him or her the opportunity to select books for circle time as his or her first responsibility.

#### *Attendance*

- Have the students help in filling out the attendance chart. Some children will be able to read the names on it. Recording attendance provides an opportunity for name recognition. Asking the helping hand to take the attendance forms to the office affords an opportunity for the child to demonstrate leadership and build self-esteem.

#### *News*

- Sharing news is an important part of circle time. This is an opportunity to fill in charts or graphs related to the weather and to celebrate special events in children's lives. Special events in the school, community or life of an individual child can also be introduced and discussed.
- The use of a talking circle allows and encourages each student to speak. Select an object to pass around the circle. Only the child who is holding the object speaks. Each child can share news and then pass the object to the next child. This activity helps develop self-esteem and language, and provides an opportunity for the teachers and the students to learn more about one another. Discretion and professional procedure may be important here as children will sometimes disclose confidential or personal information about their family.

## **A Sample Day: Timetable** continued

### *Direct Teaching*

- Direct teaching is a very effective tool for introducing new materials or concepts to the entire group. The teacher provides instruction by modelling actions or behaviours, talking about learning and asking leading questions.

### *Arts Education*

- Activities such as singing, finger plays, dance, poems and playing rhythm instruments can be used during circle time to provide a developmental experience in the arts.

### *Shared Reading*

- In this activity, two or three stories are selected, often on a particular theme. The teacher can use books of varying sizes, charts and other props to tell stories to the children. Through repetition, children begin to read/chant along verbally and then visually track the stories. By questioning the children about characters or plots, the teacher can gather information about individual children's understanding and developmental levels.

### **Learning Centre Time**

- Children self-select the learning centre they wish to use. A minimum time block of 60 minutes is provided for play at the learning centres.
- Have each of the learning centres in the classroom open for play every day. Regularly change or add to the materials within each centre based on observation of children at play. Teachers can determine which centres to modify. These changes can enrich a theme or enhance children's play.
- If no one plays at a centre for a few days, then this is a cue to reassess the centre. Perhaps the materials are too difficult or the children have grown tired of them. The solution may be as simple as adding a new colour of paint or a new piece of dress-up clothing or asking the children to go to the school library to select new books.
- When children are playing at learning centres the teacher has the opportunity to be involved in direct teaching activities with an individual child or small groups of children. This is also a time during the day to observe specific children, add to portfolios and talk or play with the children.

## **A Sample Day: Timetable** *continued*

### **Clean Up**

- Cleaning up after play provides children with the opportunity to develop responsibility for caring for their toys and materials. It is also an opportunity to practise concepts such as sorting and classifying objects and materials as they are placed into their proper storage. Adults work with the children to make sure that their shared space is as tidy and attractive as possible. Children learn a sense of pride and accomplishment in caring for the classroom and its equipment.

### **Snack Time**

- Canada's Food Guide provides ideas for a variety of healthy snacks. Food experience can be an excellent opportunity to teach about nutrition, personal hygiene, mathematics, science and multiculturalism. Snack time can also be incorporated into centre time.

### **Exercise Time**

- Regular access to the school gym or a multi-purpose area is important for muscle development, eye-hand coordination and flexibility. Space such as a hallway can be adapted for activities and games.

### **Home Time**

- At the end of each day, children learn to dress themselves by putting on their outside clothes. Adults provide assistance where needed. As children are dressed, have them join the teacher in a circle to receive mail or collect their artwork to be taken home. While waiting for family members to arrive, the teacher or assistant may read stories, sing songs or play games. Prekindergarten children should not be left unattended to wait for family members in the hall or by the front door. It is important that the teacher or associate place them in the care of the person who is designated to pick them up.

### Assessing the Learning Program

The chart below is for teachers' use in assessing the learning program, setting professional goals and identifying topics for professional development.

| Program Assessment Tool                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------|---------|
| DESCRIPTOR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | YES | MOVING TOWARDS | NOT YET |
| <b>Active Learning</b><br>Children select and are actively involved in real day-to-day problem solving.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                |         |
| <b>Direct Instruction</b><br>The teacher assists, encourages and reassures, working with small and large groups and individuals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |     |                |         |
| <b>Assessment and Evaluation</b><br>Teacher observation of children's learning forms the basis of student assessment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |                |         |
| <b>Program Flexibility</b><br>The teacher anticipates children's needs for growth in skills, knowledge and values based on knowledge of developmentally appropriate skills and content.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                |         |
| <b>Subject Integrity</b><br>The timetable is divided into large blocks which are flexible, involve minimal transitions and accommodate themes/topics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |                |         |
| <b>Choice</b><br>Children are free to choose, plan and make decisions. Activities are planned to include choice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |     |                |         |
| <b>Initiative</b><br>Children continue to work and often initiate activities. Children are encouraged to be risk takers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |     |                |         |
| <b>Individualization</b><br>Modifications to meet individual needs are clearly evident.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                |         |
| <b>Language</b><br>Children are free to talk among themselves. The teacher asks many open ended questions which follow the children's lead. The child's response is used to further learning.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |     |                |         |
| <b>Physical Organization</b><br>The classroom is set up in learning centres. Numerous materials, toys, books and manipulatives are accessible to children. Bulletin boards prominently display work done by the children.                                                                                                                                                                       |     |                |         |
| <b>Child-Centred</b><br>The classroom focus is child-centred, creating optimum conditions for children's learning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |     |                |         |
| <b>Classroom Management</b><br>Rules for behaviour are generated by child input. Children are given responsibility for choices about their behaviour and experience logical consequences for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The relaxed classroom atmosphere is a result of cooperation and mutual respect. Focus is on the positive (good choices, fair play, meeting personal needs). |     |                |         |

Adapted from Hewitt, 1990

#### **4. Selecting the Best Materials**

There are five key guidelines in selecting the best materials to support the Prekindergarten program. Resources should be:

- culturally affirming and gender balanced;
- open-ended;
- developmentally appropriate;
- non-violent and with limited commercial content; and,
- durable and safe.

##### **Culturally Affirming and Gender Balanced**

Choose books and pictures that:

- reflect a broad range of individuals and groups;
- represent society as a whole;
- portray both genders, people with disabilities, and people of various ages and cultures involved in a variety of tasks, such as taking initiative and providing leadership; and,
- portray a range of emotions in the faces and body language of the characters.

Choose toys and dolls that provide a realistic portrayal of both genders and a variety of cultures.

Modify a learning centre if you observe that it has become a "boys or girls only" play area.

Refer to *Selecting Fair and Equitable Learning Materials*, Saskatchewan Education (1991) and *Diverse Voices: Selecting Equitable Resources for Indian and Métis Education*, Saskatchewan Education (1995) for more information on assessing and choosing learning materials.

For more information about gender equity and Indian and Métis content see pages 91 and 92 of *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*.

##### **Open-Ended**

Select toys and materials for the classroom that encourage a range of imaginative play, serve a variety of purposes, encourage exploration of a range of themes, scenarios and directions and extend play as they are incorporated into different learning centres. Activities can be self-checking whenever possible.

##### **Developmentally Appropriate**

Choose toys, materials and activities that suit the wide range of learning abilities and needs present among the children in the Prekindergarten program. Children should be challenged but not frustrated as they learn and play.

### **Non-violent and with Limited Commercial Content**

Children are often influenced and limited in their play by television, movies, advertising and video games. Plan the Prekindergarten program and select materials that encourage children to use their imaginations, think creatively and solve problems through non-violent play. Avoid toys that encourage violent interaction or are based on commercial promotions.

### **Durable and Safe**

When selecting materials and toys consider their durability and safety. Considerations include choosing toys and learning materials that:

- do not have a number of small, brittle accessories and parts;
- do have rounded corners and smooth edges;
- do not have parts and openings that might trap or pinch small fingers; and,
- are sturdily constructed and made of durable materials that can be washed.

### **Children**

*Deciding, Discovering,  
Challenging, Creating,  
Seeking and Sharing.  
Risk Taking.*

### **Teacher**

*Moving and Modeling,  
Instructing, Involving,  
Chatting and Caring.  
Facilitating.*

### **Atmosphere**

*Fostering, Freeing,  
Stirring and Stimulating,  
Inspiring, Encouraging,  
Liberating.*

(Sharon Stewart,  
Toronto, in  
Schwartz and  
Pollishuke, 1990)

## **5. Ensuring Effective Operations**

The "effective practices" incorporated into the operation of a quality Prekindergarten include:

- qualified teacher and educational assistant;
- low child/staff ratio;
- selection of students: entry age;
- mixed age groupings;
- consistent attendance;
- intensive exposure to learning opportunities;
- effective use of extended blocks of time; and,
- sufficient space.

### **Qualified Teacher and Educational Assistant**

Fundamental to a quality Prekindergarten program is the provision of a qualified teacher, knowledgeable and experienced in Early Childhood Education philosophy and practice. Prekindergarten teachers have the ability to assess student developmental levels and to provide appropriate programming that includes prompting thinking, extending knowledge and building confidence.

In addition to the professional educator, each Prekindergarten classroom has an educational assistant. This position provides key supports in the classroom and to the learning program and serves to reduce the student/staff ratio. The person often has significant knowledge of the community and is a critical link between the program and families and communities.

Section V, Roles and Responsibilities, provides detailed descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of Prekindergarten staff.

### **Low Child/Staff Ratio**

A ratio of eight children for each adult provides opportunity for quality interaction, modeling and teaching. Teachers are better able to provide developmentally appropriate activity, as fewer children mean more time for interaction. In addition, there is a significant positive impact on adult behaviour and child functioning when the child/teacher ratio is low:

- adults have the opportunity to become more actively involved in activities with children and to respond to their needs;
- adults spend less time in managing children;
- adults and children have more time to interact, which promotes social stimulation and teaching;
- children are better able to regulate their own behaviour; and,
- teachers and parents have more opportunity to interact (Howes, Phillips & Whitebrook, 1992; Canadian Child Care Federation, 1993, in Doherty-Derkowski, 1995).

### **Selection of Students: Entry Age**

Three- and four-year-old children are eligible to attend the Saskatchewan Prekindergarten Program. The objective is to ensure that children with the greatest needs are served by the Prekindergarten. A team comprised, for example, of the teacher, principal, Community School Coordinator, social worker, public health or community nurse and speech language pathologist will be able to prioritize registration and waiting lists.

Children with the greatest needs should have the opportunity for two years in the program. It is recommended that an equal balance of three- and four-year-old children be maintained. The date of birth for eligibility will follow school division guidelines.

It is recommended that the school division adopt a continual entry policy for the program, permitting new children to enter whenever there is an opening during the school year.

### **Mixed Age Groupings**

The Prekindergarten program is made up of mixed groups of three- and four-year-old children. These mixed-age groupings resemble family and neighbourhood groupings that historically have provided much of children's informal socialization and education. Today, many young children spend relatively little time in either family or neighbourhood settings and consequently are deprived of the learning made possible by inter-age contact.

Researchers indicate that children's social development can be enhanced by interaction in mixed-age groupings. For example, leadership and pro-social behaviour increase. As well, current concepts of cognitive development suggest that children with similar but not identical knowledge and abilities stimulate each other's thinking and cognitive growth.

Peer tutoring and cooperative learning between less able and more able children benefit each both academically and socially. In addition, mixed-age groupings relax the learning environment and age-graded expectations (Katz, Evangebou and Hartman, 1990; Berk & Winsler, 1995).

### **Consistent Attendance**

The school division may wish to consider establishing a policy on minimum attendance requirement to ensure children attend and gain maximum benefit. This policy will help ensure that the parents of those who are enrolled are committed to the program. If families are unable to attend consistently a space will become available and a child on the waiting list will have access to the program.

Encourage a high rate of attendance by:

- serving healthy food (a nutrition component of the Prekindergarten program). This is especially effective when the children prepare the food, extend the invitation to family members and serve the snacks at school.
- taking photographs of the children regularly and using them in activities and to illustrate and decorate the classroom, books and displays. When children know that there are special activities where a photograph will be taken they are often anxious to attend. This also seems to be a strong motivator for parents, when they understand that they will eventually be able to keep the photographs.
- organizing special events, such as educational tours, children's conferences, classroom visitors and theme activities.
- using live and pre-recorded videotape of the children as they interact in the classroom. This keeps parents motivated and children excited about being part of the Prekindergarten program.

*Children's play is means of making sense of their world. For the young child, play is the single most effective means to accomplish integration and growth.*

(Spayth, Riley in Hendrick, 1990)

### **Intensive Exposure to Learning Opportunities: Hours of Operation**

Saskatchewan Learning recommends that each half-day program operate for a minimum of 12 hours per week. Ideally, however, the children will attend Prekindergarten for three hours a day, five days a week. This significant amount of time provides them with the opportunity to experience the greatest benefit from a quality program.

If the children attend only 12 hours per week, the remaining three hours are used by the teacher and educational assistant to provide family education opportunities. There are many options for structuring this time. For example, family education might be scheduled for:

- one "day" per week;
- four "days" per month; or,
- four one-week blocks throughout the year.

Each Prekindergarten will determine the option that works best in its program and community.

### **Extended Time Blocks**

Children need large blocks of time allocated for play during the Prekindergarten day. Time blocks of a minimum of 60 to 90 minutes are recommended for children to play at the learning centres each day. Three- and four-year-old children can take 20 minutes to sit and observe other children, or to walk around the classroom and inspect materials at different learning centres. After this initial exploration time, it is not unusual for children to become absorbed in play for 30 to 40 minutes. As well, an extended time period allows children to play at more than one learning centre.

### **Sufficient and Appropriate Space**

Prekindergarten children will need sufficient space that ensures their safety and meets programming needs. When determining the location of the Prekindergarten classroom, considerations include:

- building and fire codes;
- sufficient window area and natural lighting – refer to *The Child Care Regulations, 2001* on natural lighting (Sec. 56);
- a minimum of 3.25 square metres of usable floor space for each child;
- access to toilets and sinks;
- ease of providing nutrition snacks;
- access to an outside exit; and,
- access to community room or room where parent activities can take place.

In most situations, some renovations are required to ensure the space meets the needs of the program. School division secretary-treasurers or facility superintendents will have knowledge of building and fire codes and approval processes, as well as knowledge of Saskatchewan Learning's Facilities Branch guidelines for Prekindergarten/Kindergarten specifications.

The Provincial Day Care Program's *Guide to Developing a Child (Day) Care Centre* recommends that the walls be painted in soft, light colours. It is also useful to have some of the floor area covered by carpet or area rug and other areas covered by tile or linoleum. Floor covering in a soothing colour with a soft pattern is preferable to loud colours and a busy pattern. The furniture should be especially designed for young children, taking into account their size and the importance of safety. Child accessible sinks, soap, paper towels, mirror and toilets are also appropriate. As well, ample storage is needed for learning materials and for children's personal belongings.



## Parent and Community Involvement

Prekindergarten classrooms are open and welcoming. Teachers and educational assistants encourage the participation of parents and family members in classroom activity. Parents can provide active assistance and support from printing a name to tying a shoelace, reading a story, listening to children, or assisting at any one of the learning centres.

### **Suggestions for Involving Parents and Family Members in the Prekindergarten:**

- Set up comfortable seating outside the classroom door. Parents and family members picking up or dropping off a child will then have a comfortable place to stop for a minute. This is a great place for teachers to make and maintain contacts with them. Family members can be invited to drop in to the classroom for a first visit as well as encouraged to become involved on a regular basis. This contact is a means of establishing a sense of trust between school staff and families.
- Design signs and posters that warmly welcome parents and visitors within and outside of the classroom. Post signs to help parents find their way to the Prekindergarten classroom and school office.
- Seek information and suggestions from parents about their children and act on this information. Parents know their children best and will have a wealth of information regarding children's interests, needs and preferences.
- Provide food at events. The sharing of food contributes to a warm and more informal atmosphere, putting family members at ease and emphasizing that they are welcome.
- Build on successes. Involve those parents who are already participating in the classroom in encouraging other parents to come. Ask them for suggestions on how other parents might be encouraged to participate.
- Ensure that those parents and family members coming into the classroom to volunteer are given meaningful tasks or functions to perform. Be sensitive and respectful of parents' strengths, abilities and confidence in assigning tasks. Make sure that tasks are challenging, yet not beyond their abilities.
- Involve grandparents and extended family members whenever possible.
- Make it clear that parents and family members can drop in at any time. However, parents need to understand that their child should

be able to separate from them and be comfortable in the classroom before parents are integrated into the program.

### **Suggestions for Effective Communication:**

- Ensure all written and verbal communications are in clear, non-technical language that is easy to understand. Consider parents' literacy and language ability level in developing written items.
- Send home personal notes providing regular updates on the children. Establish a way of ensuring that the notes are delivered home. This is particularly important when families do not have telephones.
- Send home monthly newsletters or calendars of activities and events.
- Develop a telephone tree and use it to invite parents, family and community members to events or to participate in the classroom. Remember to make arrangements for families who do not have a telephone. Check with parents before giving their number to a telephone tree. Some parents have and need unlisted numbers for security reasons.
- Conduct home visits to establish and maintain communication and foster trust between home and school.

### **Suggestions for Building Home Liaison/Visits:**

- Phone ahead to arrange a time for the visit.
- Plan the topics of conversation before the visit. A home visit should focus on the positive and be informal. The purpose is to build a bridge between home and school.
- Explain and model to the parents how the teacher interacts and plays with their child in the Prekindergarten.
- Demonstrate the use of materials in the home that can be used to teach the child through play. For example, setting the table can be used to teach one-to-one correspondence (one cup for one chair).
- Plan with the parents how a shared effort with the teacher can benefit the child.
- Tell parents which areas and materials in the classroom are of particular interest to their children. Explain how learning occurs as children play at their favourite centres.
- Talk to parents about child development. Some parents need to be advised and reassured as to what development is appropriate in their child.

- Explain how children offer suggestions for topics of interest and how the teacher plans the program around children's input and interests *so that parents understand that the children can influence their learning.*
- Ask about parents' expectations of the Prekindergarten program.

### **Establishing an Advisory Body:**

Parent councils or advisory committees provide a useful mechanism for parents to participate in planning and problem solving activities related to strengthening the Prekindergarten program and ensuring the success of their children.

As most Prekindergarten classrooms are located within Community Schools that have established school councils, it may not be necessary to have two councils in operation, one for the Prekindergarten and one for the school. The Community School Council may be able to serve both functions. In such cases it is important to ensure that parents of Prekindergarten children are actively involved. It might be useful to set up a sub-committee of the council to lend focused support to the Prekindergarten. Schools that have local boards of trustees or local advisory committees or other parent/community advisory bodies may also want to consider establishing a Prekindergarten sub-committee. When establishing a sub-committee the school should:

- clearly define the purpose, role, responsibilities and authorities;
- ensure that parents and community members participate in meaningful activities and important issues regarding the children and the school. This fosters a sense of worth and shared responsibility;
- ensure that the membership is representative of the community in which the Prekindergarten or school resides. Make extra efforts to involve those people not usually represented;
- emphasize the importance of inclusive processes in establishing and running the sub-committee so that all family and community members are welcome;
- provide or link to community leadership development and training opportunities and supports to assist sub-committee members in areas such as problem solving, small group dynamics and communications;
- hold well-planned meetings with agendas that are action-oriented; and,
- recognize that not all councils will function at the same degree of involvement.

## **Suggestions for Providing Family Education Opportunities:**

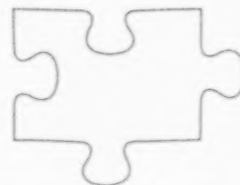
- Use the extra hours per week outlined on page 40 to develop family education opportunities.
- Determine, through discussions with the parents and observation, the types of educational opportunities that might strengthen their parenting effectiveness. It will be critical to involve the parents in the decisions about which opportunities will be offered.
- Determine which areas will be covered in home visits and which will be addressed through specifically developed learning opportunities offered in the school or from some other community source. The Community School Coordinator will be of significant assistance here.
- Use a variety of approaches. Some learning opportunities can be provided to individual parents, some to parents in small groups and others to parents with their children. Some learning opportunities can be offered within the Prekindergarten classroom and others will need to be provided in the nutrition room or other location in the school or community.
- Vary the length of the learning opportunity. It may range from an hour in the home to a series of half-day sessions that run over a six-week period.

## **Community Partnerships and Integrated Services**

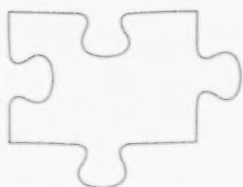
The Prekindergarten staff work with the families, principal, other school staff, parent advisory bodies and community agencies in assessing needs and coordinating and integrating services. Steps in planning and implementing integrated services include:

- identifying needs;
- identifying potential partners;
- developing plans and partnerships;
- identifying resources, services and gaps;
- matching needs with services;
- identifying possibilities for integrated services
- implementing programs and plans; and,
- evaluating.

For further information on Integrated School-Linked Services refer to: *Working Together to Address Barriers to Learning: Integrated School-Linked Services for Children and Youth at Risk, Saskatchewan Education.*



1994; and, *Integrated School-Linked Services for Children and Youth at Risk: Implementation Guide*, Saskatchewan Education, 1994. The document is available on Saskatchewan Learning's web site: <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/cc/isls.html>.



## **Continuous Assessment and Improvement**

### **Assessing Young Children**

In a Prekindergarten program there are a number of points for special consideration in carrying out assessment on young children.

#### **Developmentally Appropriate**

In order for assessment within the Prekindergarten setting to be meaningful, it needs to be based on the individual child. This acknowledges that children are individuals who develop according to their own speed and readiness. The uniqueness and individuality of each child is stressed and exploration and the development of natural curiosity and intelligence is encouraged (Jasmine, 1995).

#### **Based on Continuous Observation**

Careful observation of children as they play in real situations is more effective and efficient than contrived situations. Continuous observation in the Prekindergarten environment provides information to the teacher who can then make adaptations.

Assessment is developmentally appropriate and is:

- about exploration, discovery, potential, change, creativity. Children are creative and curious and like to explore their environment. They also can move from activity to activity or devote extended periods of time in one area. The purpose of assessment is not to label children, but rather to better understand how they learn and what they want and need to learn. Teachers need to be flexible in order to meet the ever-changing needs and desires of the children. Prekindergarten gives teachers a chance to develop teams to pool resources and consider new ideas to benefit the children;
- exciting, informal and empowering to children and to adults. Developmentally appropriate assessment is exciting because it gives teachers regular opportunities to observe change and development. Informal assessment procedures allow teachers to quickly change methods as the children change course in the classroom. Emphasis is not on wrong and right or on a product. There are many ways to do a good job and to be competent;

- about exploring a variety of intelligences. There are many types of intelligence so an open mind to assessment is important. Examination and exploration of new and different kinds of assessment tools is essential; and,
- about helping children develop as individuals. Assessment focuses on the whole child and teachers acknowledge each child is different even though there are many similarities in development. Teaching theories and assessment tools need to celebrate diversity.

### **Variety of Methods**

Assessment involves a systematic process for gathering evidence that reflects what a child can do. Information is collected through observation of process, product, conversations and conferences. Some examples of methods to gather evidence are:

- portfolios of writing and art;
- video tapes;
- audio tapes;
- anecdotal notes;
- journals;
- case studies;
- photographs;
- observation forms;
- interviews with care givers;
- interviews with children; and,
- checklists.

For more information see *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*, pages 180-199.

*Assessment in  
Prekindergarten does  
not:*

- *classify children as smart or dumb. Children are at different levels of development. The purpose of assessment is to determine the best way to enhance the experience of each child based on what is important, of interest and appropriate.*
- *set a standard that all children must achieve. Children are viewed as individuals and all achievement is celebrated (Jasmine, 1995)*

## ***V. Roles and Responsibilities***

The roles and responsibilities outlined below are intended to describe what is needed from all involved for the Prekindergarten program to be a success. This outline is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. It describes expectations of roles and responsibilities, but provides flexibility for variations in contributions, capacities and roles from one Prekindergarten to another.

### **Teachers**

Teachers in a Prekindergarten have a strong commitment to vulnerable children and a specialized knowledge of their learning needs and life experiences. They are innovative, flexible, cooperative and caring in their approach to teaching.

Teachers hold professional qualifications with a focus in early childhood education or a related field. This allows them to assess developmental levels and to create a learning environment and program that is appropriate for the range of developmental levels of the children. Teachers hold a belief in the importance of family participation and home visits and in child-centred learning. As well, they are committed to the community education philosophy and practice.

The teacher's primary roles in Prekindergarten are facilitator, master player and guide rather than dictator of what and how learning occurs.

The roles of the teacher include:

- establishing and maintaining the caring, safe, rich, culturally affirming and academically challenging learning program and environment to promote play, thinking and children's self-confidence;
- observing students, conducting assessments and evaluations and providing individualized, developmentally appropriate program responses;
- keeping records and portfolios of students' accomplishments and progress;
- establishing and maintaining close communications with parents and family members, including home visits;
- organizing, modelling and instructing parent/family education opportunities in the home and in the school;
- working in a diverse, multi-ethnic community and establishing mutual respect and trust with children and families;
- assisting in research and tracking of Prekindergarten children's development; and,
- working with other professionals and participating in case planning to meet the needs of the whole child, including speech and language pathologists, child psychologists and other human service providers from the community.

For more information about personal qualities and competencies of the teacher see page 97 and page 165 in *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*.

## **Educational Assistants**

Educational assistants work in partnership with the teacher to deliver a high quality Prekindergarten program in a warm, safe and culturally affirming environment. Where possible, the educational assistants come from the community in which the school is located, providing information about the culture and the community to help the teacher and other school staff become more aware of, and sensitive to, the cultural and socio-economic characteristics of the community.

The educational assistant has completed Grade 12 and has a combination of experience and training in early childhood development. The position requires strong interpersonal and problem solving skills, a respect and affection for children and an understanding and appreciation of the cultures and experiences of the children and the community. Educational assistants have a commitment to the philosophy and practices of community education.

The roles of the educational assistant include:

- working closely with the teacher in the development and delivery of the Prekindergarten program;
- establishing and maintaining close relationships with the parents, including participating in frequent home visits and maintaining up-to-date knowledge of the home situation of the parents;
- assisting in preparing instructional materials and collecting resource material;
- working with the children in the play centres providing information and direction, listening and playing;
- participating in case management and planning sessions with the teacher and other service providers to coordinate support services for children; and,
- assisting in the development and delivery of family education programs.

## **Parents**

Parents play a key role in the effectiveness of the Prekindergarten program. Their involvement is encouraged and actively sought as it is critical to the well-being and development of their children.

The roles of the parents include:

- providing information and advice to the teacher and educational assistant regarding their child's needs, interests and preferences;
- volunteering in the classroom by providing assistance such as reading/telling stories, helping dress the children and taking them outside for play, helping with the learning centres and listening to and playing with the children;

- ensuring their child attends regularly;
- attending Prekindergarten events;
- participating in educational opportunities; and,
- extending opportunities for their child's learning in the home.

### **Community Members and Agencies**

Community members and agencies provide a variety of important supports, enabling the Prekindergarten to meet the needs of the children and their families in a comprehensive, holistic manner. They include: churches; service clubs; human service agencies, such as Community Resources and Employment, health authorities (public health, mental health and speech language services); businesses; libraries; post-secondary training institutions; and community associations. They provide supports and services such as food and nutrition, clothing exchange rooms, immunizations, counselling, parenting supports and literacy initiatives.

The roles of community members and agencies include:

- working with the teacher, council and parents to provide a range of supports to meet the needs of the students and their families;
- respecting the values and rules of the school; and,
- maintaining the confidentiality of student records and information.

### **Boards of Education**

Boards of education that administer Prekindergarten programs work in partnership with the provincial government, communities and families in the development, maintenance and evaluation of high quality Prekindergarten programs for vulnerable children. They provide direction and support to the program.

### **Saskatchewan Learning**

Saskatchewan Learning works in partnership with boards of education to provide the vision, policy, guidelines and funding support for Prekindergarten programming for vulnerable children. The department collects data and evaluative information, preparing reviews and reports as needed. It maintains close links with the schools and boards of education and provides developmental supports, consultation and advice upon request.

## Signs of a Great Place to Learn

*Most of us, as administrators, have not had specific training in the finer points of early childhood education and may feel at something of a loss to judge the appropriateness of a preschool learning environment. I certainly do not claim any great expertise in this important level of education, but I do watch for certain features in Kindergarten and preschool classrooms. When I see evidence of the following in the classroom, I feel really good about the prospects of young children:*

- 1. The classroom is bright, colourful, inviting and cheery. It "feels" like the kind of place that a child (or I, for that matter) would like to spend a few hours.*
- 2. There is obviously lots to do in the room. Activities are set up in discernible centres that invite one to pick something up, feel a texture, build something, or make noise.*
- 3. Displays abound in the room, which feature children's creations. Bulletin boards may have teacher-made letters, labels or a central picture to establish a theme, but the greatest area is covered by the art and products of the children themselves.*
- 4. There are living plants and classroom pets for children to care for, talk about and in the case of pets, talk to.*
- 5. There are interesting pictures and story books in various places about the room. These books are on tables, or in "floor displays" that invite the children to pick them up to "read" or share with a friend. The books relate to the current theme that is the focus of the class, but also include titles that are perennial favourites of the youngsters.*
- 6. The classroom has a "dress up" centre that encourages children to play a wide range of adult, career and social roles. Props, like utensils, tools, carts, and others, are available in addition to articles of clothing.*
- 7. Adults, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are frequent and conspicuous visitors to the classroom to interact with the children, to encourage them in activity, and to help the children attach language to their activities.*

*In general, the early childhood classroom is a place that is very active, where adults help children to associate language with activities so as to promote the intellectual, emotional, social and physical development of each student.*

*Dr. Donald Duncan, Director of Education  
Lloydminster School Division*

## APPENDIX A: DEVELOPMENTAL BENCHMARKS

| Developmental Benchmarks |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ages                     | Emotional and Social Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Intellectual Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Fine Motor Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Gross Motor Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Two Year Olds            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays near but not with other children</li> <li>Seeks teacher's attention</li> <li>Observes others to see how they do things</li> <li>Asserts independence</li> <li>Exhibits high degree of self-interest</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talks mostly to self</li> <li>Uses "me" instead of name</li> <li>Enjoys showing and naming objects</li> <li>Uses a 200 to 300 word vocabulary</li> <li>Speaks in phrases or three-word sentences</li> <li>Answers yes/no questions</li> <li>Follows two-step commands</li> <li>Constructs negative sentences (no truck)</li> <li>Uses modifiers such as "some", "all", "one"</li> <li>Understands big and little</li> <li>Uses adjectives like "red", "old", "pretty"</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turns pages of a book singly</li> <li>Imitates drawing a circle or line</li> <li>Can work fingers to scoop up small objects</li> <li>Constructs simple two and three-piece puzzles</li> <li>Enjoys short, simple finger play games</li> <li>Strings large beads on shoelace</li> <li>Builds tower of up to eight blocks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kicks large ball</li> <li>Jumps in place</li> <li>Runs without falling</li> <li>Walks up and down stairs alone</li> <li>Marches to music</li> <li>Tends to use legs and arms as pairs</li> <li>Uses whole arm usually to paint or colour</li> </ul>                                                                               |
| Three Year Olds          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays in groups of two or three children</li> <li>Begins to take turns</li> <li>Shares with friends</li> <li>Enjoys independence by doing things for self</li> <li>Yells "stop it" at times instead of striking another child</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asks "how", "what", "when" and "why" questions</li> <li>Uses verbs such as "could", "need", "might" and "help"</li> <li>Understands pronouns "you" and "they"</li> <li>Understands smaller and larger</li> <li>Answers "how" questions appropriately</li> <li>Loves words such as "secret", "surprise" and "different"</li> <li>Uses words to define space such as "back, up, outside, in front of, behind, over, next to"</li> </ul>                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cuts paper</li> <li>Builds tower of nine small blocks</li> <li>Pastes using a finger</li> <li>Pours from a pitcher</li> <li>Copies a circle from a drawing</li> <li>Draws a person with three parts</li> <li>Strings beads and can arrange by colour and shape</li> <li>Uses a knife to spread food</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catches ball with arms extended forward</li> <li>Throws ball underhand</li> <li>Completes forward somersault</li> <li>Walks up stairs with alternating feet</li> <li>Rides a tricycle skilfully</li> <li>Runs, walks, jumps and gallops to music</li> <li>Throws ball without losing balance</li> <li>Hops on one foot</li> </ul> |

| Developmental Benchmarks |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ages                     | Emotional and Social Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intellectual Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Fine Motor Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Gross Motor Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Four Year Olds</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loves other children and having a "friend"</li> <li>Bases friendships on shared activities</li> <li>Seeks approval of friends</li> <li>Plays in small groups</li> <li>Delights in humorous stories</li> <li>Shows more interest in other children than in adults</li> <li>Excludes children they do not like</li> <li>Loves to whisper and tell secrets</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has trouble telling difference between reality and fantasy</li> <li>Exaggerates in practising new words</li> <li>Loves silly words and repeating them</li> <li>Vocabulary of 1200 to 1500 words</li> <li>Begins to identify letters in own name</li> <li>Begins to appreciate bugs, flowers, birds</li> <li>Learns simple card games and dominoes</li> <li>Develops awareness of "bad" and "good"</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buttons and unbuttons</li> <li>Cuts on a line with scissors</li> <li>Completes six-eight piece puzzle</li> <li>Copies some letters and numbers</li> <li>Buckles a belt</li> <li>Zips separated fasteners</li> <li>Adds five parts to an incomplete person</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walks up and down stairs one foot per step</li> <li>Skips on one foot</li> <li>Rides a bicycle with training wheels</li> </ul>                                                          |
| <b>Five Year Olds</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prefers playing in small groups</li> <li>Prefers friends of same sex and age</li> <li>Protects younger children</li> <li>Plays well with older siblings</li> <li>Washes hands before meals</li> <li>Respects property of others</li> <li>Becomes competitive</li> <li>Develops sense of fairness</li> </ul>                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retells main details of stories</li> <li>Recognizes the cause and effect of actions</li> <li>Tells original stories</li> <li>Follows three-step commands</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a knife</li> <li>Copies many letters and numbers</li> <li>Traces objects</li> <li>Draws crude objects</li> <li>Colours within lines</li> <li>Copies square, triangle and diamond shape</li> <li>Models objects from clay</li> <li>Laces shoes</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tries roller and ice skating</li> <li>Catches ball with hands</li> <li>Jumps from heights</li> <li>Jumps rope</li> <li>Walks on stilts</li> <li>Skips</li> <li>Climbs fences</li> </ul> |
| <b>Six Year Olds</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prefers friends of the same sex</li> <li>Engages in cooperative play involving role assignments</li> <li>Enjoys being praised and complimented</li> <li>Enjoys "show and tell"</li> <li>May be argumentative</li> <li>Competitive and wants to win</li> </ul>                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies penny, nickel and dime</li> <li>Counts ten objects</li> <li>Completes a 15 piece puzzle</li> <li>Acts out stories</li> <li>Plays Chinese checkers and dominoes</li> <li>Recognizes letters and words</li> <li>Identifies right from left hand</li> <li>Repeats an 8-10 word sentence</li> </ul>                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ties bows</li> <li>Establishes hand preference</li> <li>Reverses letters while printing</li> <li>Paints houses, trees, flowers and clouds</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plays hopscotch</li> <li>Enjoys ball play</li> <li>Plays simple, organized games such as hide-and-seek</li> </ul>                                                                       |

Adapted from Herr and Libby, 1995

## APPENDIX B: EXCERPTS FROM THE PROVINCIAL CHILD ABUSE PROTOCOL (APRIL 1995)

### Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

There are a variety of physical and behavioural indicators suggesting **possible** abuse and neglect. While one indicator may not provide sufficient proof, a **pattern of indicators** increases the likelihood of child abuse or neglect.

|                 | Physical Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Behavioural Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical Abuse  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• injuries (bruises, cuts, burns, bite marks, fractures, etc.) that are not consistent with the explanation offered (e.g., extensive bruising to one area)</li> <li>• the presence of several injuries that are in various stages of healing</li> <li>• the presence of various injuries over a period of time</li> <li>• facial injuries in infants and preschool children (e.g., cuts, bruises, sores, etc.)</li> <li>• injuries not consistent with the child's age and development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• runaway attempts and fear of going home</li> <li>• stilted conversation, vacant stares or frozen watchfulness, no attempt to seek comfort when hurt</li> <li>• describes self as bad and deserving to be punished</li> <li>• cannot recall how injuries occurred, or offers an inconsistent explanation</li> <li>• wary of adults or reluctant to go home, absences from school</li> <li>• may flinch if touched unexpectedly</li> <li>• infants may display a vacant stare or frozen watchfulness</li> <li>• extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn</li> <li>• displays extremely indiscriminate affection-seeking behaviour</li> <li>• extremely compliant and/or eager to please</li> <li>• sad, cries frequently</li> </ul> |
| Emotional Abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bed wetting and or diarrhea which is non-medical in origin</li> <li>• frequent psychosomatic complaints; headaches, nausea, abdominal pains</li> <li>• child fails to thrive</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental or emotional developmental lags, behaviours inappropriate for age</li> <li>• fear of failure, overly high standards, reluctance to play</li> <li>• unusual fear of consequences of actions, often leading to lying</li> <li>• extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness, mood swings</li> <li>• overly compliant, too well-mannered; too neat and clean</li> <li>• extreme attention-seeking behaviours</li> <li>• extreme inhibition in play</li> <li>• poor peer relationships</li> <li>• severe depression, often suicidal</li> <li>• running away from home</li> <li>• constantly apologizing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |

|              | Physical Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Behavioural Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sexual Abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sores in the mouth</li> <li>• eating or sleep disturbances</li> <li>• recurring physical ailments</li> <li>• unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area</li> <li>• torn, stained or bloody underwear (observed if the child requires bathroom assistance)</li> <li>• pregnancy or venereal disease</li> <li>• injuries to the vaginal or anal areas (e.g., bruising, swelling or infection)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reluctance to participate in physical activities or to undress or take a shower after sports</li> <li>• fear of normal physical contact, especially when initiated by an adult</li> <li>• self-mutilation, depression, suicide attempts, anxiety, withdrawal, phobic behaviour</li> <li>• dramatic behavioural changes, sudden non-participation in activities</li> <li>• poor peer relationships, self-image, overall self-care</li> <li>• overly compliant or conversely, overly aggressive and destructive behaviour</li> <li>• age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others (e.g., replication of explicit sexual acts)</li> <li>• age-inappropriate, sexually explicit drawings and/or descriptions</li> <li>• bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge</li> <li>• promiscuity, prostitution, seductive behaviours directed towards members of opposite sex</li> <li>• fear of home, excessive fear of men or women</li> </ul> |
| Neglect      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• abandonment</li> <li>• unattended medical and dental needs</li> <li>• consistent lack of supervision</li> <li>• consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene</li> <li>• persistent conditions (e.g., scabies, head lice, diaper rash or other skin disorder)</li> <li>• developmental delays (e.g., language, weight)</li> </ul>                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demands for constant attention</li> <li>• lack of parental participation and interest</li> <li>• delinquency or abuse of alcohol or drugs</li> <li>• regularly displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class</li> <li>• steals food, begs from classmates</li> <li>• reports that no caretaker is at home</li> <li>• frequently absent or tardy</li> <li>• self-destructive</li> <li>• school dropouts (adolescents)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

Rarely is any one indicator conclusive proof that a child has been harmed. In most instances, neglect or abuse is indicated when children present a cluster of behavioural and physical indicators.

## Reporting Suspected Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect

### Mandate

Suspected child abuse must be treated seriously and must be reported to a child protection worker or to the police. Professionals and organizations working with children must develop protocols to ensure prompt reporting of suspected cases of child abuse.

*The Child and Family Services Act* deals with the protection of children from abuse and neglect by their parents. Parents include all persons who provide the day-to-day care and supervision of the child. Section 11 (Appendix B) defines the circumstances in which a child is in need of protection and generally includes:

- child physical abuse;
- child sexual abuse;
- emotional maltreatment of a child;
- parental failure to provide essential medical treatment to a child, or failure to remedy a mental, emotional or developmental condition of a child;
- exposure of a child to domestic violence or severe domestic disharmony;
- child neglect or abandonment; and,
- children under 12 who have committed criminal offences<sup>1</sup> and cannot be charged under *The Young Offenders Act* (Canada) because of their age, but require services to prevent a recurrence.

If school personnel have reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be abused or neglected, *The Child and Family Services Act* requires them to report their concerns to a child protection worker or police officer. As part of the education system, school divisions should have protocols to assist school personnel with reporting.

It is not the responsibility of school personnel to determine if a child is abused or neglected before they report. It is their responsibility to report **suspected** cases of abuse or neglect. If it is not clear that reasonable grounds to report exist, then consultation with other teachers or school personnel is acceptable. Informal consultation with child protection workers or police is encouraged and may occur without making a formal report.

*The Education Act* provides that teachers and principals are to act as a "wise and judicious parent". Access by child protection workers or police to children possibly suffering from abuse is a proper course of action. The responsibility of the teacher and principal is to:

- ensure all staff are familiar with school division protocols with regard to reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect;
- make reports of suspected child abuse or neglect;

- facilitate contact with the child by child protection workers and police during an abuse investigation; and,
- monitor the progress of the child and share information regarding the child as required throughout the investigation, assessment and treatment of the child and his or her family.

### **Procedures**

Each teacher or other school system employee who believes that a child is in need of protection shall immediately inform the principal of the school. The principal must immediately report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to a child protection worker or police officer.

The principal, in consultation with the person reporting the suspected abuse or neglect, shall maintain a factual record of all evidence and reports to aid both reporting and recall.

A principal who has received a report of suspected abuse or neglect may consult with school guidance counsellors, school social workers, school nurses or other involved persons. **This consultation cannot cause a delay in making a report to a child protection worker or police that would further put the child at risk.**

# APPENDIX C: PREKINDERGARTEN BASIC FURNITURE AND MATERIALS INVENTORY

| Furniture and Facilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Manipulatives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Teacher Materials/<br>Teaching Tools                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Classroom<br>Consumable Supplies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• audio cassette player</li> <li>• bathroom (easy access)</li> <li>• bulletin boards (hung low for child viewing)</li> <li>• carpeted area</li> <li>• child-size chairs</li> <li>• computer and software</li> <li>• containers for access of materials on shelves and for storage in classroom</li> <li>• crib or bed for playhouse</li> <li>• cupboard for storage</li> <li>• desk and chair for teacher</li> <li>• dust pan and short handled broom</li> <li>• easel</li> <li>• experience chart stand</li> <li>• filing cabinet</li> <li>• flannel board and felt figures</li> <li>• listening post and head phones</li> <li>• lockers or coat hooks</li> <li>• magnet board and figures</li> <li>• mini gym or access to play area</li> <li>• mirrors</li> <li>• (short-handled) mop and bucket</li> <li>• overhead projector (access to)</li> <li>• paint shirts/aprons</li> <li>• parachute (access to)</li> <li>• pocket chart</li> <li>• pots and pans for play house</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• animals (variety of toy stuffed, realistic wooden and plastic)</li> <li>• beads and other lacing materials</li> <li>• blocks (variety of sizes, textures and composition, e.g. Duplo, Lego, Tinker Toy and wooden)</li> <li>• books (fair and equitable)</li> <li>• cash register and Canadian money</li> <li>• chalk slates, brushes and chalk</li> <li>• cutlery for play house</li> <li>• dishes for play house</li> <li>• doctor/medicine kit</li> <li>• dolls and clothes (fair, equitable, both genders and multicultural)</li> <li>• doll house and furniture (model)</li> <li>• dress-up accessories (purses, shoes, plastic hats, etc.)</li> <li>• dress-up clothes</li> <li>• garbage cans</li> <li>• props (miniature signs, vehicles, people, animals, buildings etc.)</li> <li>• puppets</li> <li>• puzzles</li> <li>• rhythm instruments</li> <li>• sand table materials (pails, shovels, sand wheel etc.)</li> <li>• science supplies (batteries, wires, bulbs etc.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aquarium</li> <li>• balance scale</li> <li>• bean bags</li> <li>• cages for pets</li> <li>• camera</li> <li>• cookie sheets, bowls, utensils for food</li> <li>• experience (access to)</li> <li>• date stamp</li> <li>• day book</li> <li>• hula hoops</li> <li>• hole punch</li> <li>• educational kits (MOKAKIT, CARE KIT, etc.)</li> <li>• magnifying glasses</li> <li>• measuring sticks, cups, cylinders and containers of various sizes and shapes</li> <li>• pet supplies and food</li> <li>• plants</li> <li>• scissors</li> <li>• stapler</li> <li>• straight pins</li> <li>• utility balls</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• film and processing</li> <li>• food for food experience</li> <li>• "fun tack"</li> <li>• glue</li> <li>• markers, crayons, pencils, pens</li> <li>• miscellaneous treasures including buttons, shells, rocks, etc.</li> <li>• paint</li> <li>• paper (chart, note, lined, unlined, coloured, etc.)</li> <li>• play dough</li> <li>• staples</li> <li>• tape</li> </ul> |

| Furniture and Facilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Manipulatives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Teacher Materials/<br>Teaching Tools | Classroom<br>Consumable Supplies |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• puppet theatre</li> <li>• refrigerator and stove (access to for food experience)</li> <li>• refrigerator for play house</li> <li>• sand table</li> <li>• shelves</li> <li>• sink</li> <li>• stove for play house tables (child-size)</li> <li>• water shirts/aprons for water table</li> <li>• water table</li> <li>• white board</li> <li>• work bench</li> <li>• water shirts/aprons for water table</li> <li>• water table</li> <li>• white board</li> <li>• work bench</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• materials that can be sorted and classified</li> <li>• sorting trays</li> <li>• sponges for water table, paint, etc.</li> <li>• telephones for play house</li> <li>• vehicles (variety of boats, planes, trains, trucks, etc.)</li> <li>• water table materials (pails, jugs, hoses, etc.)</li> <li>• wood scraps and carpentry tools (3 inch) vice, 8 oz. hammer, push drill, sand paper, nails, screws, etc.)</li> </ul> |                                      |                                  |

## APPENDIX D: REFERENCES

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